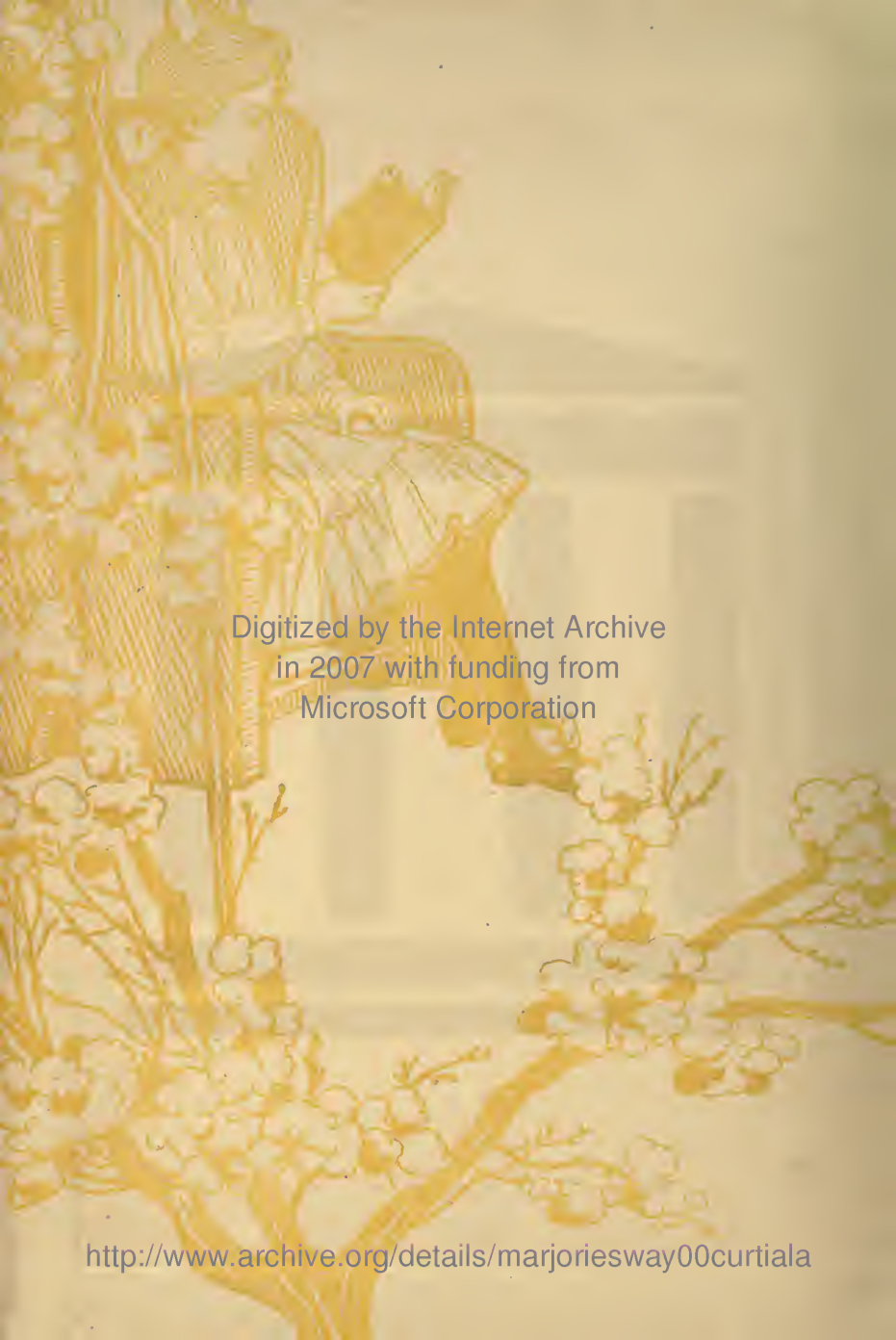
MARJORIE'S WAY

ALICE TURNER CURTIS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"Yes, Luke named all three. He hardly stopped to think a minute. This one is 'Buff,' and one is 'Stripe,' and the other is 'Spot.'"

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"Oh, mother, Betty has given me the new yellow puppy!" said Margie, as they set the basket down on the lower step.

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"Oh, no, he won't," Betty assured her, giving a gay little jump. "He has been whipped twice, very carefully, for running after the guinea-hens, and now he knows better."

"Do you really want to keep him?" asked Mrs. Philips, with a little sigh, turning to Margie.

"Oh, mother, of course I do! Luke has four dogs, and his father doesn't care."

Mrs. Philips smiled a little, and stroked the puppy's shining golden-brown ears, and Margie knew that the puppy was hers.

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Margie nearly loosened her grip on the squirming puppy in her surprise.

"That's what she wrote my mother," went on Betty;

Aunt Cora came out to the shaded porch

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By

ALICE TURNER CURTIS

Author of "Marjorie's Schooldays," Etc.

Illustrated by E. M. Nagel

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Philadelphia

1911

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Introduction

MARJORIE PHILIPS had two ambitions. One was to be like her aunt, Miss Maria Wing, whom she was visiting in Ashley, a small New England town. The other was to help Luke Sanders, a poor boy whom she left behind her among the South Carolina cotton fields. How both of these ambitions were realized, in ways very surprising to Marjorie, is the story of this book, together with many delightful good times that Marjorie found among her new friends in Ashley. Those who would like to know more about Marjorie, Ada, and Adrienne will find them again in "Marjorie's Schooldays."

Contents

CHAP.		PAGE.
I	Plans and a Puppy	5
II	Aunt Cora's Cakes	16
III	Luke Loses Something	28
IV	About Luke's Clothes	35
V	A Journey for Margie	44
VI	Aunt Maria's House	50
VII	Sarah Mullins' Manners	60
VIII	Betty's Wigwam	72
IX	Luke's Lessons	82
X	A Picnic at the Pines	91
XI	A Day of Delights	102
XII	Luke's Luck	115
XIII	Saluda Swamp	124
XIV	A Piece of Punk	135
XV	Just Like Aunt Maria	146
XVI	Margie's Fair	157
XVII	Luke Makes a New Friend	166
XVIII	The Surprise	171
XIX	Mr. Field's New Picture	177
XX	Margie and Luke	187

Illustrations

PAGE

AUNT CORA CAME OUT TO THE SHADED PORCH *Frontispiece*

THEY WALKED UP THE PATH TO THE FRONT DOOR . 54

LUKE CAME EVERY DAY FOR HIS LESSON 85

"OH, ADA, IT ALL CRINKLES ABOUT MY FACE" . . 154

"WHY," SHE EXCLAIMED, "THAT IS LUKE SANDERS!" 180

MARJORIE'S WAY

CHAPTER I

PLANS AND A PUPPY

MARGIE PHILIPS sat on the broad porch which sheltered the side-door where the big rose-tree grew. A little breeze came across the cotton-field and the jessamine and honeysuckle vines moved lazily with a little rustling, sleepy noise.

Margie sighed, a little happy sigh, as she looked out over the tangled vines and blossoms of the garden. On the other side of the cotton-field and beyond the growth of small pines she could catch a glimpse of another house where her friend Betty Savory lived. Margie was thinking about Betty, and of a present which Betty had promised her. There were three new setter puppies at the Savory plantation, and Betty had said that Margie should have one of them.

"I do hope 'twill be the yellow one," thought Margie. "If she should give it to Luke Sanders he might give it a dreadful name. He calls one of his dogs 'Jones,' just because Mr. Jones gave it to him. If Betty should

give me the yellow puppy I should name him—I should name him ——" and Margie hesitated a moment, then remembering a formidable row of books in the living-room she decided instantly, "I should name him 'Napoleon.'" Margie looked across the field, thinking it was about time for Betty or Luke to appear. "Oh, dear," she said aloud, "I don't see how Luke will manage about learning to write after I go away. I don't see how he can go to school without better clothes, either," and she sighed again. "I wonder what Aunt Maria would do?"

Margie's home was a large comfortable plantation house, but it had evidently seen better days. Not a vestige of paint could be seen on its gray exterior. Indoors there were evident signs that there was but little money to be spent on replenishing worn-out furnishings. The carpet on the living-room was worn to a grayness which betrayed nothing of its original design. The ceiling and walls were dull and discolored. The wide old sofa sank in mountainous ripples, and the various chairs had evidently been frequently repaired by unskilled hands.

To Margie it seemed the most delightful house in the world. She often thought of the sitting-room at Betty Savory's. At Betty's there were shining new

tables, a bright carpet, and chairs that were evidently not intended to sit in, because Betty's mother frequently said that little girls must be very careful and not knock their feet against the legs of the chairs; and Margie was quite sure that no one, unless it were a very tall person, fully grown up, could possibly sit in a chair without sometimes hitting her feet against the chair-legs.

She often felt sorry for Betty. For one thing, the Savory house was so new. There was no delightful old attic, filled with trunks and boxes and dilapidated old furniture, where little girls could play on rainy days. Betty did not have such a nice garden, either, and, poor Betty, she did not have any Aunt Maria!

At the Savory plantation there were teams of big, strong mules to do the heavy work of ploughing and breaking up new ground; there were prosperous herds of young cattle, and horses for driving and riding. At the Philips' there was only one mule, whose life was one of constant toil; there were only two cows, and a big flock of hens, that were under one's feet all over the place.

An old white dog, "Uncle," had been Margie's playmate since she was a baby. But Uncle was getting too fat and indolent, and too old to skip

about after his little mistress; and Betty, the proud possessor of three young puppies, which the Irish setter had made a home for in the new dog kennels, had partly promised Margie the all yellow one. The other two had black spots on their neck and legs.

Margie had a good deal to think of this morning. There was the new puppy, and something else very delightful and important. Aunt Maria Wing had written that, as Margie was now nearly ten years old, she thought she ought to go regularly to school; and that she wanted her to come to Ashley, Mrs. Philips' old home, and live with her and go to school.

Aunt Maria lived in the same house where Margie's mother was born. Years ago, when Margie was only two years old, Aunt Maria had come to the plantation for a visit. Margie sometimes wished that her name had been "Maria" instead of Margie, for she had often resolved to herself to be just like her Aunt Maria when she grew up, because Mrs. Philips said that no one could be more lovely than sister Maria. Margie was glad, however, that her name began with "M" even if it was not "Maria." Her father sometimes called her "Sweet Marjorie," but "Margie" was the pet name given her by her friends. She had confided in Betty that when she grew older, she should be

called "Miss Marjorie," because a great many people called her aunt "Miss Maria." Margie was always eager to hear of what Aunt Maria had done when she was Margie's age, and she and Betty played many of the games which Mrs. Philips told them that she and Aunt Maria had played. But the story Margie liked best of all was the one her mother told her about Aunt Maria, when she was a little girl, teaching his letters to a little lame boy who could not go to school, carrying him her books to read, and saving all her pennies until she had enough money to pay for drawing lessons for him. Margie always waited for her mother to say, "and he showed such talent that others became interested, and he had lessons from one of the best artists in Boston, and now he is an artist himself; and he always says he owes everything he is to your Aunt Maria."

Margie often wished she could help some one that way. She did not know any lame boy, but there was Luke Sanders, who lived in the little cabin on the main road, and who had often said that he would like to learn to write. She had resolved that he should be her pupil. At first Luke copied Margie's neat "a's" and "b's" rather reluctantly, but he had

finally become interested, and declared that if he only had proper clothes he would attend the school when it began in the fall.

As Margie sat thinking about all these things she heard some one calling her name—"Mar-gie," "Mar-gie," and she looked up to see Betty coming up the path at the edge of the cotton-field.

Betty was carrying a large basket and walked very slowly. "Oh, Margie," she called, "I wish't you would come and help bring your puppy. He's 'most as heavy as—as a bossy-calf!"

"O-oh!" exclaimed Margie joyfully, and hurried down the steps along the path. When Betty saw her coming she put down the basket and straightened up her shoulders. Her brown eyes danced gaily, her yellow hair was drawn smoothly into a big braid, but the braid seemed to dance about her shoulders, and as she waited for Margie she hopped up and down with impatience.

"Oh, Betty, were you really bringing it over to give to me to keep?" called Margie before she reached her friend.

"Yes, yes," laughed Betty, "and mother's right glad to be rid of him. He chewed up two napkins this morning. Father has given the other two to Luke."

Margie had reached Betty's side by this time, and was kneeling beside the covered basket.

"Just hear him cry, Betty, he wants to get out," she said.

"Well, he can't," said Betty seriously, dancing around to the other side of the basket. "If we should let him out he would go straight home, and then my mother would have him disposed of; she said if your folks didn't keep him she should dispose of him!" Even Betty grew sober as she announced her mother's decision.

"Couldn't we lead him home? Oh, see his little yellow nose! Betty, I could carry him home in my arms. I'd love to."

Betty giggled again. "He squirms worse than a worm," she said. "He wriggles all over and slides right away, no matter how strong you hold him. We mus'n't let him out till we get to your house, and then you must feed him right away and keep him tied up for days and days, and only take him walking with a string; Luke Sanders says so."

"I wonder how 'Uncle' will like him," said Margie, taking hold of one side of the basket, while Betty grasped the other.

"I should think Uncle would be real glad to have

him for company," replied Betty, with a little one-sided skip. "Just think, Luke Sanders has got four dogs now. He says his father doesn't care. He'd just as soon have taken 'Buff' too."

"Is this dog named?" Margie looked at Betty anxiously.

"Yes, Luke named all three. He hardly stopped to think a minute. This one is 'Buff,' and one is 'Stripe,' and the other is 'Spot.'"

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Margie nearly loosened her grip on the squirming puppy in her surprise.

"That's what she wrote my mother," went on Betty;

"and that was one reason I was glad you and Luke wanted the puppies. I thought the puppies would make you think of me," and Betty reached into her skirt pocket after her handkerchief, while Margie gave an audible sniffle, and said, "Shall you go to school?"

A little smile came back to Betty's face. "Why, didn't I just tell you that my grandma says it is time? 'High time' is what she wrote."

"Oh, Betty," said Margie mournfully, forgetting for the moment all the prospective joys of living with Aunt Maria, "don't dreadful things happen?"

"But you don't have to go to Columbia," said Betty reproachfully, "or live with your grandmother and go to school. You can stay here and say your lessons to your mother and teach Luke, and everything."

"Oh, Betty, haven't I told you?"

"No. What is it, Margie?"

"I forgot, having Buff come, and hearing about Luke Sanders naming the puppies such homely names, and being afraid my mother wouldn't let me keep Buff, and a little worried, not much, but just the littlest bit, that Uncle might hurt Buff! I forgot!"

"Forgot what?" and Betty jumped down two steps and back, and thumped the basket up and down. "What have you forgot?"

"That I am going away, too. Way off in a country called Massachusetts, where mother used to live." For the moment Margie forgot that Aunt Maria lived in that far off country.

"My!" said Betty, and, forgetting that she had meant to go directly home, she again seated herself on the step. "Why, who will teach Luke if you go away?"

Marjorie sat down beside her. "That is just what is worrying me. I don't see how I can plan for him to have drawing lessons either."

CHAPTER II

AUNT CORA'S CAKES

BETTY leaned back against the upper step and looked at her friend questioningly. "Do you suppose when you go to school that they will call you 'Marjorie,' or just 'Margie'?" she asked.

Marjorie looked sober for a minute. "Well, I don't know; but my name is 'Marjorie,' of course, and as none of them know me very well I should think likely they would call me 'Miss Marjorie,' at first."

Betty nodded approvingly. "What do you want Luke to draw?" she continued.

"Oh, pictures! You and me on these steps, perhaps, or our house; and then, when he gets to be a man, he'll say it was because I helped him," said Margie.

"I guess Luke won't want to draw," persisted Betty. "My father said the Sanders were all ignorant. Why, Mr. Sanders can't read."

"Well, Luke can read," replied Margie, "and he can write 'most as well as I can, and if I can manage to get him clothes he's going to school this fall."

"How can you get him clothes," said Betty, won-

deringly, "if you go way off?" and then, without waiting for her question to be answered, she said, "Oh, Margie, I know 'tain't perlite to say you are hungry when you are visiting; but this isn't a real visit, and I wouldn't think of asking for cake, nice as your cake is, but just a piece of bread with the littlest bit of sugar on it. Do you suppose your mother would excuse me if I asked for it?"

"Oh, I'm hungry too, Betty. Let's step right round to the kitchen," responded Margie. "It's funny we both happened to be hungry to-day. This is the day Aunt Cora bakes cake, and sometimes, not always, but just sometimes, she bakes little ones in crinkly tins for me."

The two little girls ran round the corner, and Aunt Cora's shining black face peered at them from the kitchen window.

"Fur de land sake, wot you got, missy?" she asked, pointing at the puppy, who was close at Margie's heels; and Buff's history was briefly explained.

"And Aunt Cora, Betty brought him way over here, that is, most of the way, I helped a little; but we do feel hungry," and Margie looked up pleadingly. "And I should like to offer Betty a cake, after all her trouble," she concluded impressively.

"W'y, 'cose, missy. Seems sort of strange I was jest a-bakin' cakes!" and the old negress chuckled delightedly. "'Cose you want to offer 'freshments to comp'ny. You step right into the shade, and Aunt Cora'll fetch yer out some 'freshments."

Margie and Betty exchanged a delighted look. Aunt Cora's treats were well known to them both. Uncle had appeared, and apparently was inclined to be pleased with the puppy, while Buff regarded the fat white dog with evident admiration and delight. After a little the puppy followed his fat friend toward the stable.

Aunt Cora came out to the shady porch that opened from the kitchen, where the two little girls were waiting. She had a china plate in each hand. Upon each plate rested a good sized tart filled with grape jelly, and beside it a small round cake with crinkly edges. A little biscuit spread with fresh butter completed the feast.

"I cal'klate yer won't see many cakes up Norf, missy," remarked Aunt Cora pityingly, as she handed Margie her plate.

"Oh," said Betty, "isn't this lovely!"

"I'm fetchin' some cool milk," called Aunt Cora as she went toward the spring-house.

"There! and I was so thirsty," said Betty happily. "Margie, my braid seems all loose, someway; do you s'pose you could braid it over before I go home?"

"Oh, yes," said Margie.

Betty bit into her tart, and turned an ecstatic look toward her friend. "To think my mother wants me to go to Columbia!" she said, as soon as the tart permitted her to speak.

"And mine wants me to go to Massachusetts," said Margie.

"Oh, Margie!" Betty's voice was very sympathetic, and she was deeply surprised when her friend responded cheerfully,

"It's a right nice place, and I shall have lots of nice little girls to play with. Not just one girl, like you, Betty, but ——"

Marjorie's remarks were not finished, for Betty had carefully set her plate on the bench and, with an offended glance toward Marjorie, walked off toward the garden. She paused before turning the corner, and loftily remarked,

"I bid you good-bye, Miss Philips."

Just as Betty disappeared Aunt Cora came back with two glasses of foaming milk. "Whar's yo'

comp'ny, missy?" she asked, stopping before she reached the kitchen porch.

"She's just stepped round the corner, Aunt Cora."

"Roun' de corner? Well, you step after her and fetch her to get this milk while it's cool."

So Margie hurried after the offended Betty, glad of an excuse to make friends.

"Oh, Betty, Betty," she called, running toward the front of the house, "come and get your milk; it's right out of the spring-house, and cool as cool!"

Betty was standing close to the big rose-bush at the corner of the house. She did not turn at Margie's voice, so Margie came near to her and touched her arm.

"Don't you want some cool milk, Betty?" she said gently.

"You know I'm just as thirsty," said Betty plaintively; "but you said you should like those Northern girls better than you do me!"

"Oh, Betty Savory! I didn't say any such thing! I just said there would be lots of girls to play with instead of one. How could I like any girl so well as you, Betty!" Margie's dark eyes were very soft, and her voice sounded as if she felt as badly as Betty, so Betty relented and smiled a little.

"The milk looks all creamy," suggested Margie, as she smiled back at her friend; and they both hurried back to the kitchen door where Aunt Cora stood waiting.

"Isn't it funny, Margie, that we are both going away? I don't have to go till September."

"Oh," responded Margie, "I don't go to school until September, but my Aunt Maria thinks it will be nice for me to come right away and have the summer to get acquainted. Just think, I shan't come home for two whole years!"

"Why! Why, that's forever and ever! I am to come home every month and stay over Sunday."

Just then Mrs. Philips came up the steps, and the little girls moved along to make room for her on the bench beside them.

"We were just talking about going away," said Margie, and her mother thought there was a tone of sadness in her little girl's voice.

Mrs. Philips had some knitting-work in her hand, and for a moment she did not reply, but seemed to be thinking about her work. After a moment she said,

"Well, you are both very fortunate little girls, aren't you? To go and live with such nice people as Grandma Savory and Aunt Maria, to go to school,

and grow up to be just the kind of women that we all expect you to be," and Mrs. Philips smiled brightly upon the eager little faces.

Margie leaned against her mother and watched the busy needles moving back and forth.

"I suppose you want me to be just like Aunt Maria," she said.

Her mother laughed a little. "That is what you want to be, yourself, isn't it? Well, your father and I will be satisfied if you make just such a woman as Aunt Maria," she responded.

"I s'pose I shall be like grandma," said Betty, a little doubtfully.

"And I am sure your mother and father will like that. You will have lovely things to write Margie about, Betty. You must write her all about Columbia, and about your grandmother's fine house, and her beautiful china. Why, Betty, did you know that your grandmother has cups and saucers, and all sorts of dishes, that were brought from France over a hundred years ago? Yes, indeed, and they are as delicate and fragile as it is possible for china to be. When the terrible war came your grandmother and her servants buried the china in the cellar, and it stayed there until peace was declared. You must be

sure to write Margie all about the china. Then, too, Betty, you are to go to a nice school, and you will make many new friends."

"Oh, yes," said Betty hopefully. "Won't it be nice, Margie?"

"I shall get acquainted with nice girls, too," suggested Margie.

"Why, of course you will," responded Mrs. Philips. "You are both going to have such good times; but Margie's will begin first, Betty, because she will start for Ashley in two weeks; so she will have to write the first letter to you.

"In Ashley Margie will go to the same school I used to attend when I was her age, and some of the girls who were my friends then have grown into women and have little daughters about Margie's age, and she will have them for her playmates. Margie can write you about them, and, when winter comes she will tell you about the sliding and skating, and about the beautiful pine grove where we used to play."

"Oh, Margie!" said Betty happily, "we shall have lots to write," then, looking admiringly at Mrs. Philips, she said, "Don't you wish you were a little girl, Mrs. Philips, to go away to school?"

Mrs. Philips nodded smilingly.

"I s'pose I must be going home," said Betty regretfully, "if you'll fix my hair, Margie?"

"Come right up to my room," said Margie, in what she felt to be a very grown-up manner, and much like the way in which Aunt Maria would speak, "and I'll make your hair tidy."

Betty followed her friend into the big hall which ran straight through the house. The stairs curved like the letter S, and when Betty and Margie were "really" little girls, not more than seven years old, they thought it great fun to slide down the shining walnut banisters. Even now Margie sometimes forgot her ambition to be a "truly grown-up" person, and slid swiftly down the delightful curves.

Betty sat very quietly while Margie brushed and braided her hair.

"You can do almost everything, can't you, Margie?" she said gratefully, when it was finished.

"You know I am 'most a year older than you, Betty," responded Margie, trying not to feel too proud. "When you are older you will prob'ly know 'most as much as I do."

"Oh, yes!" replied Betty cheerfully. "I shouldn't wonder if I knew more. My grandmother speaks

French, and I am to learn that; and then, too, I am to take music lessons; so, prob'ly, I shall know a good deal more than you do. What do you s'pose you'll learn, Margie?"

This new point of view made Marjorie silent for a moment. She was not angry, only surprised.

"I don't know," she answered slowly. "Of course the chief thing is for me to learn to be just like my Aunt Maria."

Betty shook her head. "I don't believe you will," she said.

"Well," responded Margie, "of course I may not be as lovely as she is, but I can learn to act the way she does."

"Oh, she ain't lovely," said Betty. "My mother remembers her, and she says Miss Maria Wing is a right plain person."

"Betty Savory! my aunt is lovely! She has beautiful eyes, and she smiles all the time; and she is tall, oh, ever so tall," said Margie, whose ideal of beauty was to be taller than any one else, "and she is good, good as can be!" she concluded.

"My mother says Miss Maria Wing is short; stubby was what she said she was, stubby," and Betty repeated the word with emphasis. Margie was very

near to tears, but she had been taught that one must always be polite to a guest, so she choked back the little sob, and the angry words which were so near her lips, and said, "Well, Betty, you were real good to give me the puppy. I'll fetch the basket home to-morrow."

"I s'pose I must be going," responded Betty meekly; and then, resolving not to be out done in politeness she said, "I enjoyed my lunch, the tart 'specially; and I can take the basket as well as not. I'm sure you're welcome to Buff."

Margie held open the chamber door for her guest to pass out first, and politely followed her down the stairs and across the hall to the porch. Betty picked up her basket from the steps. "Good-bye," she said.

"I'll walk a little way with you," said Margie, taking hold of the basket. "Please let me carry it, Betty, as far as the woods; then you can take it the rest of the way."

"You're real good, Margie," said Betty. "I shouldn't be s'prised a mite if your Aunt Maria was tall, as tall as Luke Sanders' father, maybe."

Mr. Sanders was the tallest man in the neighborhood, and Betty felt that even Margie could expect nothing more in height than that.

"P'raps my mother has forgotten how tall she was," continued Betty, anxious that complete peace be established. "She may have grown tall. I have. Why, I've grown most the whole of me since I was two years old, and so have you, Margie, and likely as not your Aunt Maria has grown more than we have. She's prob'ly as tall again as when my mother saw her!"

Margie felt a little doubtful about this, but she did not dispute it.

The two little girls were now very near the edge of the woods, and in a moment they were in the shade of the trees nearest the cotton-field. Under a tree just off the path sat a boy. His face was freckled, and his eyes were very light blue. His thick hair was a faded yellow, and he had evidently outgrown the worn trousers and faded shirt which he wore. A straw hat with a torn brim lay beside him, and his feet were bare.

"Oh, there's Luke. Hullo, Luke!" called Betty.

Margie looked toward the boy, a little anxious pucker coming in her forehead. "Oh, dear," she sighed, "I'm 'fraid Luke doesn't look the way boys do who grow up to be artists."

CHAPTER III

LUKE LOSES SOMETHING

LUKE was industriously at work upon some strips of leather, evidently parts of a discarded boot. Fastened securely to a small sapling near at hand were Spot and Stripe. He nodded to Margie and Betty as they came nearer, and said, "I'm making collars for the pups," and the girls sat down beside him.

"They're not very pretty collars, are they?" suggested Betty, as Luke pushed the blunt needle through the leather, and carefully fastened the ends of the stout thread.

"Not very," agreed Luke, a little despondently; "but they'll have to do till cotton picking, then p'raps I can earn money enough to buy them new collars."

"Oh, Luke!" said Margie reproachfully, "you are going to school this fall."

"Well, cotton-picking's all over 'fore school begins, ain't it?" said Luke a little defiantly. He was a year older than Margie, but he very seldom remembered it.

"Did you know Margie was going away in two weeks?" asked Betty. Luke nodded; he was holding

a bit of leather between his teeth just then, and could not speak.

"And, Luke," said Margie, "after I'm gone you can say your lessons to my mother. I know she'd like to have you, and you can write me letters same as Betty does; and when fall comes you must go to school."

Luke shook his head. "Not 'less dad can manage to get me some better clothes," he said firmly. "I tried it last fall, and the Watson boys were calling me names and plaguing me all the time, so dad said to quit goin'. I shan't go 'thout I have shoes," and Luke replaced the leather in his mouth and turned an anxious eye toward the puppies.

For a moment Margie did not say anything. She was thinking that Luke was not like Arthur Field, the lame boy whom Aunt Maria had taught. Margie remembered that her mother said that "Arthur was always so glad when Aunt Maria came to see him, and so eager to learn." She thought Luke was not very eager about learning.

"What do you s'pose you'll learn when you go to school?" asked Luke, as he put the last stitch in his work. "I s'pose you'll learn grammar, for one thing."

"Oh, yes," said Margie.

"Dad says my mother knew grammar. He says

if she'd lived she would have had me learn more'n I'm likely to now," he continued, rising to his feet and moving toward the dogs. The girls followed him, and helped him adjust the leather collars on the puppies' necks. In a few minutes the puppies were well leashed, so that Luke could easily lead them. The boy looked at them admiringly. "I never saw smarter pups," he said. "I'll take right good care of them, Betty."

"I know you will, Luke," responded the little girl, and nodding a cheerful good-bye the boy started on his way through the woods toward his home, a small house about half a mile distant.

"Oh, Betty," said Margie, as he disappeared, "I must manage to get Luke some shoes. His father never will. I never seem to save pennies enough; I don't see how Aunt Maria did; but some way I must earn money or Luke will never grow up like Arthur Field."

"He'll grow up better," declared Betty, who was familiar with the story of the lame boy, "because both of Luke's legs are straight, and Mr. Field's legs were all twisted when he was a boy." But this did not seem to comfort Margie.

Luke's father had a blacksmith shop near his cabin,

and here Mr. Sanders shod horses, repaired wagon-wheels and, when not at work, sat in the sunny doorway and smoked. Luke and his father lived alone. Luke did most of the work in the house, and his father declared that he was "good as a girl 'bout housework." The neighbors often felt sorry for the motherless boy, and many a crisp, brown loaf from Aunt Cora's oven, or spicy cake from Mrs. Savory's well-ordered kitchen, found its way to the little house.

Luke was very happy as he led his new puppies home. Notwithstanding Marjorie's fears Luke really was anxious to learn, and he was glad that Mrs. Philips was to be his teacher. And he now owned the handsome setter pups, that were trotting along with occasional pulls on their leash to remind their new master that they were not to be wholly overlooked. But Luke's chief cause for happiness was a promise his father had given him that morning.

It would be a moonless night, and Mr. Sanders had told Luke that he would take him on a coon hunt. Old "Pointer," one of Luke's dogs, was a famous coon dog, and Luke could hardly wait for night to come. If they treed a coon perhaps Luke could climb the tree and shake the coon off some branch where the animal was sure to perch. Luke remembered one dark night

of the previous spring when this had happened, and when the coon had snarled at him fiercely as he tried to poke it off the swaying branch. Luke liked to remember that he had not been frightened by the snarls, but had persevered until the coon had let go its hold and dropped to the ground below, where Mr. Sanders was ready for it. Luke thought about the savory stew which his father had made next day.

As he hurried the puppies along toward their new home he decided that he would keep them in the shed, close to the kitchen, until they had become well acquainted with "Pointer" and "Jones." The older dogs, he decided, could sleep in a box-like kennel that he had made back of the house.

As he came out of the woods into the turnpike a man driving a pair of thin, tired-looking horses stopped his team and called out, "Hi, boy!" and Luke walked toward the wagon. The man's face was covered with a dark beard, and his hooked nose and black, beady eyes did not make a very pleasant impression on the boy. He wore a close, dark cap, and in the back of the wagon was a large pack, such as is sometimes carried by pedlars, covered with a black enameled cloth.

"Got some puppies, have you?" he said, as Luke

came near, pointing his whip at Spot and Stripe; "pretty little fellows, too." The man's voice was more pleasant than his appearance, and his praise of the dogs sounded friendly.

"What's their names?" he asked.

"This is 'Spot,' sir," answered Luke politely, "and the other is 'Stripe.'"

"Good enough," said the man. "Just hand 'Spot' up here a minute, will you? I like dogs."

Luke handed him the puppy, and the man rubbed its head and seemed much pleased with it. "Just lift his brother up so I can see the two of them together," he said, putting Spot down in the bottom of the wagon between his feet, and twisting the dog's leash about the whip socket.

"Where did you say you got these dogs?" he asked.

"Betty Savory gave them to me," replied Luke, as he lifted Stripe into the wagon.

"They are nice puppies," said the man, his little black eyes twinkling like beads, as he leaned down and patted Stripe, and twisted his leash around the iron foot-rest in front of the wagon-seat.

"I'll buy these puppies, my boy, if you'd like to sell."

Luke laughed a little and shook his head vigorously. "Oh, I couldn't sell dogs that were given to me," he responded.

The man watched Luke sharply. "Wait a minute, young man, till you see how much I'll pay you for them, and I guess you'll change your mind. I'll give you a dollar! Yes, sir, a whole dollar, and I'll take the dogs!" He had reached into a pocket, and now held up a round silver dollar.

Luke shook his head again. "No, sir, I don't want to sell them."

The man's friendly look vanished. "You look as if you needed money," he sneered. "You'd better take a dollar when it comes your way. Last call; what d'you say?"

Luke came a step nearer the wagon intending to take the puppies out, and as he did so the man flung the silver dollar into the road and called out,

"There's your money; I'll keep the pups." At a word the thin horses sprang forward, and before Luke could grasp at the wagon the team was out of his reach, leaving a whirling cloud of dust behind. "Stop!" screamed the boy frantically, running after it. "Stop! Stop!"

CHAPTER IV

ABOUT LUKE'S CLOTHES

THE driver of the team was evidently familiar with the road, and knew that there was no house for nearly a mile. The Sanders' cabin he had passed just before meeting Luke, and there was little possibility of his meeting any one before he was well out of the boy's reach, and could cover the puppies up with the blankets which lay on the seat beside him. With the dogs concealed from sight he could pass any traveler with the security that no one would wonder how he came by the setter pups.

But Luke did not think of all this. He remembered the man's cruel face, and the thought that Spot and Stripe were at his mercy made his feet go all the faster. He must catch up with that team. But run as fast as he could the distance between them steadily increased until even the distant cloud of dust vanished, and the boy, out of breath and discouraged, sank down by the roadside and sobbed bitterly. The rosy twilight had faded into the soft summer dusk when he started for home. His heart was very sore. He felt that he should never see the puppies again

and, worse than that, he feared the man would terrify and abuse the little creatures.

His father stood in the doorway as Luke came into the yard.

"Well, son," he drawled out, "gettin' late to meals; what's the trouble?" for as soon as the boy came near his father noticed the tear-stained face. Luke sat down on the rough step, and told his story. Mr. Sanders listened.

"Where's the dollar?" he questioned anxiously.

Luke turned a reproachful look toward his father. "Do you think I took it?" he asked.

"Well, son," responded the man slowly, "it looks to me that's about all you'll ever get, and as for leavin' a good dollar layin' in the road, that seems reckless. You're too tired to go searchin' for it, but I'll step down and see if I can't find it. He was a powerful mean sarpint, son, that's what he was, to get your purps that way," he added consolingly; "now you step in and wash up, and by the time I come back with that dollar the bacon will be done to a turn, and the corn-cake is all ready now;" and Mr. Sanders stepped briskly down the road to look for the silver dollar.

"Too bad," he reflected, as he looked about in the

dusty road. "I reckon the two of them would have fetched five dollars in Columbia; but we've more dogs now than we've any use for; it's hard on the boy, though; he's such a tender heart for animals, just like his pa," and Mr. Sanders sighed. He soon found the dollar and hurried back to the little house.

"It's your money, Luke," he said, handing it to the boy.

"I don't want it," said Luke.

"Well, son, then your pa will take care of it for you," and Mr. Sanders dropped the coin back into his pocket. Luke had but little appetite for the corn-cake and bacon, and crept away to bed without speaking of the coon hunt. Mr. Sanders seemed to have forgotten it also, for he sat on the door-step until late in the evening, wondering if there was any way that he could discover who the man was who had taken Luke's puppies. "I hope the critter will sell them to some nice folks," and with this hopeful thought Mr. Sanders also went to bed.

The two weeks between the day that Spot and Stripe disappeared and the day when Margie was to start for Ashley went very rapidly. She and her mother had many long talks about Mrs. Philips' own school-days, and about all the interesting things which

Margie would see on her journey to Massachusetts. The little girl was very anxious to take Buff with her.

"I could make a present of him to Aunt Maria," she suggested. "I could take him as a surprise, and she would be real pleased. He's the loveliest thing I have, mother, and you know you told me that when we give away anything it should be something worth the giving," said Margie, noticing that her mother did not seem to agree with the suggestion that Buff should be a surprise to Miss Wing.

Finally it was decided to write Aunt Maria and ask her permission for Margie to bring Buff, but not as a gift.

"It would hurt Betty's feelings, my dear, if you gave the puppy away."

"Oh, but I wouldn't give it to any one but Aunt Maria, and Betty would like that!" said Margie confidently.

Betty was very much surprised when Margie told her that Buff was to go to Ashley.

"Oh, Margie, will you have to take him in a basket?" she asked, remembering how heavy the puppy was the day she had tugged him over to the Philips' plantation.

"No, in a train," answered Margie cheerfully. "It

takes a train two days and a night to get there, and I am to sleep in a nice little bunk on the side of the car, and Mrs. Jones in a long bunk right under me; and p'raps there'll be a little bunk somewhere for Buff."

"But he won't stay in it, Margie, you know he won't. He goes running and chasing everywhere, and he'd run right out of the door and p'raps you'd never catch him!"

"Oh, dear," said Margie, "I s'pose he would. But I can tie him to his bunk. I think Aunt Maria will be real pleased that I thought to bring him, don't you, Betty?"

Betty looked a little doubtful. "Folks don't all like puppies," she said. "If I was to take a puppy to Columbia I expect my grandma would send me right home! You see puppies chew things so," she added apologetically.

"But Aunt Maria isn't like your grandma," responded Margie.

"No, I s'pose grandmas know more than aunts," said Betty thoughtfully. "Did you know Luke Sanders' father found the dollar?" she continued before Margie could question her first statement. "He found it in the road, but Luke won't let him buy shoes with it."

"Of course he won't," said Margie. "Luke's going to try and find that man some time and get the puppies back and give him his old dollar."

Betty shook her head wisely. "Luke can't ever find him. And if he should, the puppies would be all grown up into dogs. If Luke wants to go to school I should think he'd like to spend the dollar for shoes. My mother said she should think Mr. Sanders would be 'bliged to the man for taking them."

This was a new point of view to Margie, and Betty continued, "And mother says if Luke wants clothes he ought to go to work and earn clothes. She says boys ought to be independent."

After Betty went home that day Margie thought over what her little friend had said about Luke earning clothes. She remembered that the lame boy had not had any father, only a mother who had earned their living by going out as a seamstress. She did not remember that Aunt Maria had ever bought clothes for Arthur Field. She had taught him to read, paid for his first drawing lessons, and lent him books; but, apparently, had not been concerned about his clothing.

Margie sighed a little. It seemed very difficult to imitate Aunt Maria. In the first place Luke was not

lame. To be sure she had taught him to read, just as Aunt Maria had the lame boy, but what ought she to do next? In the midst of her puzzle her mother came out on the porch with her basket of sewing. Margie was not old enough to notice that her mother was never idle. If she sat on the porch her hands were busy with sewing or knitting. In the mornings she was at work in the garden, or helping Aunt Cora with the household tasks. It seemed to Margie that her mother was a perfectly care-free person, only doing just what she liked to do best. But to Mrs. Philips' constant industry and effort was due no small part of the comfort of the old plantation house. There were many days when Mr. Philips was not strong enough even to come out on the sunny porch.

Mrs. Philips noticed that Marjorie was very thoughtful, and waited until the little girl was ready to tell what was troubling her.

"Mother, I was thinking about Luke!" she said.

"Yes, dear."

"And about his not having clothes to wear to school. Aunt Maria never bought clothes for the lame boy, did she?"

"Oh, no! Your Aunt Maria was a young girl at

that time. She only taught him what she could, and helped him that way."

"But she paid for his first drawing lessons!"

"That was only a few dollars that she had saved penny by penny."

"I've only got thirty-eight cents, and I have been saving ever so long," said Margie.

Mrs. Philips made no response, and after a little Margie spoke again.

"Luke can't go to school unless he has better clothes, and Betty's mother thinks he ought to earn them himself, but I want to help him."

Mrs. Philips nodded approvingly. "That's right, my dear, help him all you can. You can write to him, and it will be good practice for him in answering your letters. Tell him about your studies and what you are learning and that will interest him and help him."

"I was thinking about getting him clothes," responded Margie. "I s'pose if the lame boy had needed shoes Aunt Maria would have got them for him, wouldn't she?"

"If she could," answered Mrs. Philips.

"Well, it seems to me that I'd better get shoes for Luke instead of drawing lessons. He don't seem to

care about drawing, and there's nobody to teach him if he did," concluded Margie. "I've just about given up his ever being an artist. I'll have to think up something else for him to be."

CHAPTER V

A JOURNEY FOR MARGIE

MARJORIE was to go to Massachusetts with Mrs. Jones, a milliner in Columbia, who had promised to take charge of her until they reached Boston, where Aunt Maria would meet them. Aunt Maria had written that Margie might bring Buff. She added that she was not much used to dogs, but perhaps Buff would make Margie feel more at home. Margie promised her mother that she would watch the puppy very carefully, and not let him annoy Aunt Maria.

Luke had promised Margie that he would save the money he hoped to earn picking cotton to buy shoes.

"I should like to tell my aunt about you," Margie had explained to him. "I wish I could tell her that you were going to be an artist, but I guess you never will be that; so I want to tell her that you are going to school and are going to be something else. What do you think you'd like to be, Luke?"

This was a new proposition. Luke had never been consulted as to his future before, and he looked at Margie a little blankly.

"I do' know," he answered slowly, digging one bare heel into the soft warm earth. "Artists ain't so much. Dad says they have a machine they call a camera, and just point it at things they want to take pictures of and then pull a spring, or something like that, and there the picture is, all took. I guess you don't have to know much to do that," Luke concluded scornfully.

"Oh, Luke, that is just taking pictures, it isn't being an artist. An artist draws things with a pencil, and then when he knows enough he paints them. But I guess you'll have to do something else."

"I s'pose I could keep store," suggested Luke hopefully.

But Margie shook her head. "No, anybody can do that. We'll have to think up something for you to be. I'll tell you," she said; "I will ask my Aunt Maria what you had better be, and then I'll write you what she says and you can begin right off."

Luke did not look greatly pleased at the prospect, but he made no objections.

"I've got a present for you, Margie," he said. "'Tain't very much. I wanted to give you something, and I made you this. Guess 'twill remind you of something."

The boy had drawn a small object from his pocket and was regarding it closely.

"Oh, Luke, what is it?" said Margie eagerly, and Luke handed her his gift. It was a small wooden dog which the boy had carved with his knife from a block of white pine. As Margie took it she exclaimed, "Why, it looks just like 'Uncle'!"

A smile brightened the boy's face. "I tried to make it like 'Uncle,'" he said. "I thought taking Buff you might forget old 'Uncle.'"

"It's lovely, Luke. I shall always keep it," said Margie. "Thank you."

Luke looked very happy at Margie's praise of his gift.

"You write me what your aunt thinks I'd better be," he said, and Margie nodded cheerfully.

"I've about decided since you made this dog," she said, "that you'd better be a carpenter. Carpenters make houses and things out of wood, and p'raps that's the best thing to be."

"All right," agreed Luke. "I s'pose I'll have to go to school just the same?"

"Yes, indeed," replied Margie soberly.

At length the day came for Marjorie to start on her journey. The black leather trunk, with mamma's

initials in brass nails on the top, all packed with Marjorie's clothing, was strapped on the back of the carryall; the old mule was brushed and groomed and harnessed ready to start for Columbia, and Betty and Luke had come to say good-bye.

Betty and Margie evidently regarded the journey as a delightful affair, and Mr. Philips and his wife seemed unusually cheerful. Luke was rather dull and quiet, and rubbed Buff's head so vigorously that the puppy finally snapped his objections; and then Luke picked him up and held him. Uncle kept close to Margie, as if he realized that all this commotion concerned his little mistress; while Aunt Cora stood in the kitchen door, her usual smile hid behind her white apron, which she held to her eyes.

When they were all seated in the carriage, Luke lifted Buff up to the seat beside Margie. Mr. Philips started up the mule, and Margie called back, "Good-bye," and then again, "Good-bye, Uncle," for the old dog was following the team down the driveway. He stopped just as Mr. Philips turned into the main road, and, with his head on one side, watched the carriage out of sight. He could hear Buff's barks and yelps for several minutes. Then Uncle walked slowly back to the house, and lay down in the shade of the big

rose tree at the corner. It seemed very quiet and peaceful to him. That barking puppy was evidently out of the way for a time, and Uncle resolved to have a good rest before he got back.

"You won't have to do lessons now Margie's gone, will you, Luke?" said Betty, skipping along to keep up with the boy's long steps.

"Mrs. Philips is going to teach me now," said Luke, a little proudly, for he felt that it was a great advance to have Mrs. Philips for a teacher instead of Margie.

"What for?" inquired Betty.

"What for!" echoed Luke scornfully. "So I will know something, and be like other folks. You have lessons, don't you?"

"Yes, but I don't want to have lessons," responded Betty; "and as for you being like other folks, I'm sure you are much nicer than any boy I know."

"Umph," said Luke; "you don't know any other boy. There isn't any other boy lives anywhere near here."

"I do know another boy! I know two boys. Twin boys they are. And their names are Lee Ponsonby Clay and George Lafayette Clay, and they live in the next house to my grandma's in

Columbia, and they are real South Carolinians. Why, they could write years ago. I guess they could always write," she concluded.

Luke made no response. Some way he did not feel interested in twin boys, especially boys who could always write.

After a moment's silence Betty continued, "And they have got a great, big dog; 'most all white, their dog is. His name is 'Hero,' and he's a Sam Barnard!"

"What's a 'Sam Barnard'?" inquired Luke.

"Oh, it's the kind of a dog the Clay boys have," replied Betty, with a little flirt of her yellow braid. "Grandma says that 'way off in the Alps Sam Barnard dogs go out and rescue travelers, and bring them in out of the snow."

But Luke was not much interested. He was wondering if Margie's aunt would decide for him to be a carpenter.

"It will be a long time before Margie comes home, won't it?" he said soberly.

"Two years," replied Betty; "and when she comes back, everybody is going to call her 'Miss Marjorie,' and she is going to be just like her Aunt Maria."

CHAPTER VI

AUNT MARIA'S HOUSE

MRS. JONES seemed surprised when she saw Buff, and Margie was very much surprised when she was told that the puppy could not go in the same car with them, but must ride in the baggage-car.

"But Buff will be lonesome," she said, when the stout baggage-man lifted her up so she could see where Buff was to ride.

"Oh, I'll look after him," said the baggage-man. "I like dogs, and this one is a nice little fellow. I saw two a good deal like him this morning, only they were spotted. Two boys had them down by the State House. Don't you worry about this puppy," he added; "I'll take good care of him."

"Thank you very much," said Margie gratefully, smiling at the big man; and she and Mrs. Jones went to their own car.

When the train left the station at Columbia Margie waved her hand to her father and mother as long as she could see them. They were smiling and waving

too, but Margie had a choked feeling in her throat, and began to feel, as the train moved out of the station, that a terrible thing had happened. Here she was going away from everything she knew. She wished that Mrs. Jones was not there so she could put her head down on the seat and cry. One or two tears did creep down her cheeks, but she wiped them quickly away. When she looked up Mrs. Jones was smiling at her, and Margie smiled back. Then she tried to think about Aunt Maria, and resolved to be so much like her that even her dear mother would be surprised. She had just decided upon this when Mrs. Jones put a little package on her lap.

"What is it?" asked Margie.

"Open it and see," said Mrs. Jones, with another smile and a nod of her head that made Margie look at her more closely and wish that she would smile again; for when Mrs. Jones laughed you could hardly see her eyes, and little dimples came in her cheeks and about her mouth.

"Open it and see," repeated Mrs. Jones, thinking the little girl had not understood her.

Margie untied the silver string and took off the white wrapping paper, and found a lovely little box all covered with roses. She then removed the cover,

and there was a brimming box of the most delicious candy she had ever seen.

"Oh," said the little girl rapturously.

"I thought little girls liked candy," said Mrs. Jones; "and I don't mind eating a piece now and then myself;" and she picked out a chocolate cream and put it between her white teeth.

While they were enjoying the candy, Margie told her companion about Betty, and then she opened her little leather traveling-bag and took out the wooden dog Luke had made, and told her about Uncle.

"I guess Luke will be a carpenter when he grows up," she said, looking at the wooden dog admiringly; and she felt very much encouraged when Mrs. Jones told her that carpenters were very useful men, and that it was an excellent trade.

Mrs. Jones seemed to find so many interesting things to talk about and to laugh about, and Margie was so interested in watching her eyes and her dimples, that she almost forgot the little note-book and pencil that her father had given her, and which she had expected to fill with notes about her journey, and then write it all home to her mother and Betty. She slept soundly all night, and the train went so smoothly and so swiftly that she told Mrs. Jones she couldn't

remember any of the scenery. The journey was soon over, and when they left the train in Boston a lady hurried up to them and said, "I know this is my dear Marjorie," and the little girl looked up to the dark, smiling eyes so like her own dear mother's.

But she was sorry to say good-bye to Mrs. Jones.

"When I go home I will go on the train with you, won't I?" she said.

"I'm sure I hope so," replied Mrs. Jones, and Margie was always glad to remember that Mrs. Jones told Aunt Maria she would not wish for a more pleasant traveling companion than Margie.

Poor Buff whined piteously when he was at last set down on the platform at Margie's feet. The journey had seemed a very long and lonesome time to him. Margie smoothed his silky head and told him who Aunt Maria was. She wondered why the bright smile seemed to fade out of Aunt Maria's face when she looked at Buff.

There was another short ride in a train, and then Aunt Maria and Margie and Buff got out at the little station of Ashley. Margie thought it was the prettiest place she had ever seen. The little wooden depot had flower-beds each side of it; and as they walked up the road she noticed that almost every house was painted

white, with green blinds, and that there were flowers in the gardens.

Miss Wing's house was one of those that was painted white. It was a square house with a door in the middle. A picket fence shut off the garden from the street, and Miss Wing opened the gate for Marjorie and Buff to go through. Then they walked up the path, paved with red brick, to the front door. When Aunt Maria opened the door she kissed Margie again.

"This was your grandmother's and grandfather's home; it was your dear mother's home, and now you must feel it is yours." Just then a howl from Buff made them both turn quickly round. Close to Margie's feet was the puppy, curled up in a round bunch, while a few feet away stood a large Maltese cat, its tail waving in the air, its fur standing up, and evidently ready to spring upon the frightened puppy.

"Oh, dear me!" exclaimed Miss Wing. "I am afraid that Sarah Mullins isn't going to like the dog."

Margie had gathered Buff up in her arms, and Miss Wing "shoo-ed" the cat off the piazza.

"Is your cat's name 'Sarah Mullins'?" asked Margie.

"Yes," responded Aunt Maria. "You see old Mrs.

They walked up the path to the front door

Mullins gave me the kitten, and so I named it after her. I'm afraid Sarah and the dog will fight."

"Luke Sanders 'most always names dogs after people who give them to him," said Margie. "I hope Sarah Mullins won't hurt Buff," she added.

Miss Wing sighed. "Well, we will have to watch till she gets used to him. What do you give him to eat?"

"Oh, he likes milk pretty well, and sometimes we give him chicken-bones. He's a real good puppy."

Miss Wing smiled at Marjorie's wistful face, and leaned down and patted Buff's yellow head.

"I am sure he is," she said; "and when Sarah and I get used to him we shall be a very happy family. Now we will go up-stairs and see your room. Yes, Buff may go up-stairs this time."

Margie looked at her aunt and, remembering that Betty had said that she shouldn't wonder if Aunt Maria was tall as Mr. Sanders, smiled a little. For, even to Margie's loving eyes Aunt Maria was short. She was, as Betty had declared, "stubby."

Margie thought the little room over the front door was the whitest room she had ever seen. With its frilled muslin curtains, its white bed and a faded carpet of dull blue and white it seemed very cool and

restful to the tired little girl. Buff evidently approved of the bed, for he made a scrambling jump up the side, and was greatly surprised when Aunt Maria seized him and set him down on the floor.

"There! his feet have left marks on your nice white bed," said Aunt Maria, giving the puppy a gentle shove with her foot.

Margie looked at him reprovingly. "Do you think I ought to slap him, Aunt Maria?"

"Yes, I believe I would," responded her aunt.

Margie sighed a little. "I think you had better do it," she said. "I'm afraid he wouldn't know what I meant."

Buff had snuggled close beside Aunt Maria, and was evidently intent on making friends. She leaned down and patted him.

"I'll slap him next time," she said, with a little laugh; "you see, my dear, he has come so far to see me that I don't feel as if it would be really polite to slap him to-day," and she laughed again.

Margie looked at her admiringly. Somehow she did not seem to care if Aunt Maria was short. She wished Betty could see her smile.

In a short time the little black trunk, with the initials on the top in brass-headed tacks, was brought into the

room, and Aunt Maria unpacked it while Margie sat in the little white rocking-chair by the window and rested. A woodbine grew up the piazza posts, and crept up about the window, and Aunt Maria told Margie that some humming-birds made their nest among those vines every year, and if she watched closely she would see them going back and forth from the nest.

When Miss Wing began to take the things out of Marjorie's little hand-bag she came across the little wooden dog.

"There," she said, holding it toward Margie. "Now that is a nice quiet dog."

"That's Uncle," said Marjorie.

Miss Wing looked at it more closely as she set it down on the white bureau.

"So it is," she said. "Uncle was about Buff's age when I saw him, but this little image looks like him. Who made it?"

"Luke Sanders, the boy I taught to write," said Margie proudly. She wondered to herself if Aunt Maria would not at once think how much her little niece was like her. "He's going to be a carpenter," Margie continued, "that is, if you think that is a good thing for a boy to be."

Miss Wing looked a little puzzled, but she responded quickly. "Why I should think it would be a very nice trade for him, but," and Aunt Maria looked at the wooden dog again admiringly, "I should think he would want to be an artist."

Margie shook her head. "I s'posed you would feel that way," she said; "but Luke can't be an artist. I've talked to him about it, but he can't draw, but he can make things in wood; so I think he can be a carpenter. I said I'd ask you."

Aunt Maria laughed a little and gave the wooden dog a pat. "Well, then he shall be just what he wants to be most, carpenter or artist," she said. "Now we must go down-stairs and get our supper, and give Buff some milk."

Margie thought it was just like playing keep house to be in Aunt Maria's kitchen. The stove was so shining black, the floor such a beautiful yellow, and the braided rugs so bright and round. On the mantel-shelf was a clock shaped like a church, and the glass door of the clock had a bunch of red strawberries painted on it. The dining-room was separated from the kitchen by a little passageway. Aunt Maria showed Margie how to set the table, and put on the mulberry china which had belonged to Margie's

grandmother. The little girl told her aunt about Betty and Grandmother Savory's china. "And now I can write her about my grandmother's china," said Margie.

"Oh, but there is nothing historical or remarkable about this," said Aunt Maria. "Almost every house in the village has a set just like it." But Margie resolved to tell Betty about it just the same.

She went to bed very early that night, and the little wooden dog on her bureau seemed to look at her as if to say, "Good-night, Miss Marjorie."

CHAPTER VII

SARAH MULLINS' MANNERS

WHEN Marjorie woke up the next morning Aunt Maria was standing beside the bed with a very sober face.

"I am afraid Buff is lost," she said, as she helped Margie braid her hair. "I let him out this morning when I started the fire, and he scampered off as fast as he could go down the street. I have sent the little Webb boy to look for him, and perhaps he will find and bring him back before we are through breakfast."

Aunt Maria was glad that Margie did not cry. She had been almost afraid to tell her about Buff, but Margie had made so many good resolutions that she did not even think of crying. Indeed, she almost felt to blame for Buff's truancy, for she could see that Miss Wing was very much concerned.

"Oh, I will go after him, Aunt Maria. If I go out in the street and call 'Buff,' 'Buff,' perhaps he will hear me and come."

Miss Wing thought that this was an excellent plan, and they both went out and walked down the street

a little way; Margie called "Buff," "Buff," but they did not see anything either of the Webb boy or of the puppy. Miss Wing met one or two neighbors, to whom she described the puppy, and at last they gave up the search and went home.

Aunt Maria did not seem to feel as badly as Margie had expected.

"Perhaps Buff is lost," she said; "and I expect Sarah Mullins would be pleased not to see him again."

"But you wouldn't want poor Buff lost, would you, Aunt Maria?" said Margie plaintively. "Why, he would wander about, and get hungry and lonesome, and ——"

Margie felt the tears very near, but Aunt Maria had taken close hold of the little girl's hand.

"Lost!" she said. "Why, I wouldn't lose Buff for anything. You may be sure he won't go hungry or get lonesome in Ashley. Why, Margie, I don't believe there are a dozen dogs in the village! Think of that. I shouldn't wonder if everybody made friends with such a nice puppy; and probably all the boys will want to buy him."

Margie smiled a little at this. "I wouldn't sell him," she said.

"Sarah Mullins" was washing her face and occu-

pied the centre of the front door-step, so Miss Wing stepped carefully to one side not to disturb her, and Margie did the same.

"I'm afraid if Buff came back he would be afraid of Sarah, and go away again," said Margie, looking at the Maltese cat, which did not condescend to notice them. She thought if it had been Uncle or Buff how they would have jumped about and said in welcoming barks how glad they were to have them come home. Margie decided that she did not like cats.

The Webb boy proved a trusty messenger, for in a little while he came into the yard bringing Buff with him. Sarah Mullins was still on the step, but this time she did not seem to mind Buff at all. She looked at him with a polite curiosity, but did not arch her back or act at all displeased.

The puppy eyed her doubtfully for a moment, wondering if this was a new kind of a dog; then, waggling his whole body he approached nearer and finally settled down beside her. Sarah went on with her toilet without noticing him. The Webb boy watched Buff's proceedings with vague disappointment as he rang the bell. "That pup won't ever be a fighter," he soliloquized.

When Miss Wing and Margie came to the door and

saw their two pets in such a friendly proximity they were greatly surprised.

"Well," said Miss Wing, "this is a change."

"That's just like Buff," said Margie. "He made friends with Uncle, although Uncle never liked him, and now he has made friends with Sarah, and he will stick right to her and follow her everywhere."

"Dear me! he seems so clumsy that I am afraid he will get hurt if he follows Sarah," said Miss Wing, remembering Sarah's fondness for climbing tall trees and venturing out on window-ledges. Buff had settled himself comfortably beside the cat, and now ventured to rub his head against her shoulder.

Sst! Whish! Quicker than a flash, Sarah had given him a slap with her paw which sent the puppy howling to the far end of the piazza, where Margie ran after and tried to comfort him.

"Don't you think they'd better fight it out now?" suggested the Webb boy hopefully. "I've heard folks say that after one good, square fight a dog and cat were more apt to be good friends."

"Buff can't fight," said Margie. Sarah Mullins soon strolled down toward the fence, and Buff was taken into the shed, where he found a nice basin of milk and a plate of bones on the floor, and soon for-

got his troubles, and when a few moments later Sarah appeared from behind the wood-pile he did not remember to be afraid of her. But basins of milk seemed to Sarah Mullins to be her own special property, and she had no intention of allowing this yellow puppy to defraud her of her rights; so she very promptly pounced upon him. Buff wheeled round with a yelp of terror, and managed to plant his front feet square in the basin, splashing the milk in every direction. His terrified howls brought Margie flying into the shed, and she unfortunately left the kitchen door open behind her. In an instant Buff had rushed into the kitchen, leaving prints of his wet feet all over the shining yellow floor. Sarah had turned her attention to the milk, so Buff was soon comforted, his feet wiped, and he stayed close to his little mistress until Sarah was shut down in the cellar for the night.

After this Margie watched the puppy more closely. She had made friends with the Webb boy, whose name was Ferdinand Augustus, and had told him about Luke, and showed him the little wooden dog, which Ferdinand had promptly offered to buy.

"I'll give you a quarter for it," he said.

"Why, you can't sell gifts," said Margie; but Ferdinand's prompt admiration of Luke's handiwork gave

the little girl a new idea. If Luke was really going to be a carpenter, she thought, he might as well begin to practice at once.

"I'll get Luke to make you a wooden dog, if you want one," she said to her new friend, and Ferdinand agreed with surprising promptness.

"I tell you what," he said eagerly; "you write him to make me two dogs, one like Buff and one like that coon dog of his, and I'll pay fifty cents for the two."

"Oh, will you!" responded Margie. "I'll write him to-day. The money will be a great help," she added, seriously.

She reflected, that, in a way, this was the same way Aunt Maria had helped the lame boy; for the lame boy had painted little pictures which Aunt Maria had found purchasers for, and the money had been used for drawing lessons. It was hard that Luke could not be an artist, she thought, but perhaps after he had been to school and grew older he might develop a talent for drawing. She looked at Ferdinand's neat clothes almost enviously, wishing Luke had some one to buy clothes for him.

Marjorie watched her aunt very closely, and often when alone practiced her aunt's manner of walking, of sitting down and, standing before her little mirror

would endeavor to smile like Aunt Maria. She watched her at the table and endeavored to hold her fork exactly as Aunt Maria did. There was one difficult problem. They did not like the same things to eat. Aunt Maria liked her toast very brown and crispy, and Margie did not like toast at all. Aunt Maria ate her oatmeal without sugar, and to Margie oatmeal without sugar seemed impossible. Then Margie liked pickles, while Aunt Maria declared that the sight of them made her mouth pucker.

But Margie was persistent; she thought of all the plans her mother had made for her to come to Ashley so she could grow up like Aunt Maria, and she resolutely ate the crispy toast, refused the most tempting pickles, and shook her head when her aunt asked her if she did not want sugar on her oatmeal.

She learned to set the table exactly as Miss Wing did, and her aunt often thought that there was never such a thoughtful, helpful girl as her little niece.

"You must be a great help to your mother," she said one day when Margie had carefully washed the dishes and was putting them away.

"But I never do these things at home," said Margie. "Aunt Cora does all the work."

"But your dear mother has so much to do," re-

sponded Miss Wing. "She does all the sewing, and knits and works in the garden. I often think what a hard time she has had."

"What, mamma?" said Margie in surprise. "Why, mamma only does just what she wants to."

"My dear child, your mother works harder than Aunt Cora, and besides that she has to plan very carefully to keep you all comfortable. I want you to try all you can when you are older to make things pleasant for her."

"Oh, but I am trying now," said Margie earnestly, thinking of the oatmeal without sugar. "I am trying all I can."

"That's right," said her aunt; "if your father was strong and well everything would be easier. Do you know, Margie, I have a great plan in my head. I believe I will tell you about it."

"Oh, do, Aunt Maria!"

"Well, in the first place, your mother hasn't been north since she was married, fifteen years ago; and I have seen her only once in all those years."

Margie nodded.

"And I have been thinking how fine it would be if she and your father would come north and stay a month or two with us."

"Oh!" said Margie; then she grew silent, remembering how often she had heard them talk of that very thing, and always her mother had said that they could not afford it. So Margie shook her head, sadly.

"They can't afford it," she said.

"But I have a plan," said Aunt Maria, gaily. "You know the beautiful pine grove on the hill? Your grandfather never would allow a tree to be cut there, but the underbrush was always kept cleared away and the trees well cared for, so that now they are so beautiful that people drive from neighboring towns to see them; and now the town of Ashley wants to buy that hill for a park, so that I will not have a chance to cut down the beautiful trees and sell them for timber. And they will pay me two thousand dollars for the ten acres. And I shall write your mother that I will give her one thousand if she and your father will come and get it."

"Oh, goody!" said Margie. "When do you suppose they'll come?"

"I think about Thanksgiving time," said Aunt Maria.

That afternoon they walked up the hill to the pines. Buff went with them, chasing a chipmunk along the

fence, and falling over in his hurry to go faster than his uncertain legs would carry him.

The big pine-trees were on the slope of the hill. They did not grow very closely together, and the ground under them was thickly carpeted with the clean pine-needles. Miss Wing leaned against a big tree and touched it affectionately.

"Your mother and I used to call this circle of trees the library," she said. "When we were children father and mother used to come up here with us on Sunday afternoons in summer and father would read to us. Sometimes we brought a lunch with us, and then we would go over where those big, big trees are and eat it there; and we called that the dining-room. We were never allowed to leave any pieces of paper or rubbish about. Your grandfather was very proud of this grove. People say there are very few such trees left in Massachusetts."

Marjorie looked about admiringly. The sunlight flickered through the green boughs, but it was very cool and every little breeze was fragrant with the breath of the pine. "We will come up here real often, won't we, Aunt Maria?" she said. "I think it would be a lovely place to play dolls. Every tree

could be a house, and every doll have a tree, and then they could visit."

"Mercy me!" exclaimed Miss Maria, looking at Marjorie anxiously. "What have I been thinking of! You haven't a doll to your name."

Marjorie laughed. "I have four at home," she said; "but you see, being such a large girl, and bringing Buff, I thought I better not bring even Victoria. She's the littlest one."

"Well," said Miss Wing, "I have two beautiful dolls in a bureau drawer in my room; they have been there twenty years, and I expect that they will need new clothes and new names by this time. We will get those dolls out to-night; and I tell you what we will do, Margie, we will have a dolls' party here in the grove. We will ask the little Streeter girls, and Mollie West, and Adrienne Wilson, and Josie Stevens and Ferdinand Webb. And I will make strawberry ice cream."

"Oh, Aunt Maria," said Margie. "that will be lovely. When will we have the party?"

"We will have it Saturday," said Miss Wing.

Margie could hardly believe that so many delightful things could happen in one day; for she was looking forward to the visit from her mother and father, and

now she was not only to have two dolls of her own, but a party with strawberry ice cream. She sighed a little, however, for all these things seemed to make it almost impossible for her to grow like her aunt as rapidly as she had hoped to do.

CHAPTER VIII

BETTY'S WIGWAM

BETTY had taken her dolls out under the pine-trees where she could look across toward Margie's house. She had changed the name of her best doll to "Marjorie." It did not seem as lonely to Betty after she had decided to rename her doll. She had a new game to play to-day, she was "making-believe" that the pine woods was Ashley, where Margie had gone to live, and that she herself was "Aunt Maria." One doll was named "Betty" and the other was "Marjorie," and "Betty" and "Marjorie" had just started for school when the real Betty saw Luke coming along the path by the cotton-field.

"Luke! Luke Sanders," she called after him, and the boy waved his hat in answer. When he came nearer Betty was dancing about. "Oh, Luke!" she said, "I've thought of something lovely for you to do!"

"What?" asked Luke, a little doubtfully.

"You can build me a playhouse right here under the trees. Not a doll's playhouse, but a real, truly

one, big enough for me to go into. And I can keep 'Margie' and 'Betty' in it, and when I come down here to play I can make believe it is Ashley."

"What could I make it out of?" asked Luke.

"Oh, you can get some boards and things," said Betty; "and I should like to have you begin it right away, because the first thing we know I will be going to Columbia to go to school."

Luke looked about the open space where Betty had been playing. It was surrounded by large trees, but near the centre of the opening were two slender young pines. The boy looked at these carefully.

"I could make you a camp," he said, "such as hunters make when they are away off in the forests."

"Oh, how will you make it, Luke?"

"First I will have to bend these young trees over," said Luke, "and fasten the tops down to the ground with big rocks. And then put pine boughs all across the top from one tree to the other to make a roof."

"But the ends and sides will be all open," objected Betty. "I don't want that kind of a house."

"Well," said Luke, "I can't make a board house. I s'pose I might make a wigwam."

"A wigwam?" asked Betty.

"A wigwam is what the Indians call their house," explained Luke.

"Did you ever make one?" questioned Betty.

"No," said Luke; "but there's a man who lives the other side of Saluda Swamp, who has seen Indians and wigwams, and he told me about them. They are like this;" and with a stick Luke marked off on the soft earth a rude picture of a wigwam.

"Oh, Luke, let's make one. I could help," said Betty.

"The best wigwams are covered with the skins of wild animals," said Luke, thoughtfully.

"And we haven't any wild animals, have we?" said Betty.

"But if Indians are off in the woods they cover them with the branches of trees," continued Luke.

"Oh, we can do that," agreed Betty.

"If we had blankets or rugs to cover it it would be a lot better and easier," continued Luke. "Dad has an old buffalo robe in the shed that I know he'll lend me."

"And I guess I can get a shawl," added Betty. "Let's begin now, Luke."

"We'll have to have some poles for the frame," said Luke. "I guess dad will lend me some; he's

got a lot of poles cut for the beans, and piled up back of the shed. I'll go get some."

"And I'll go with you," said Betty happily; and putting the dolls carefully under a pile of brush the children started after the poles.

They proved longer and heavier than Betty had expected; but she tugged bravely away at the bunch she had selected, and listened to Luke's explanation of how real wigwams were built.

By the time they got the bean poles to the clearing in the wood they were too tired to begin work, and Luke said that it was time for him to go home and get his father's supper. "But I'll come over in the morning and bring the buffalo robe," he said.

"And I'll bring a shawl," said Betty. "It will be lovely to have a real Indian house, won't it? And when Margie comes home, if she isn't too grown up, she can play in it, too."

Luke was at the pine woods in good season the next morning, and brought with him the buffalo robe, a sharp hatchet and a ball of stout twine. First he drew a good sized circle in the soft earth, and then began to stick the poles in, each one slanting toward the centre of the circle. It did not make as high a framework as he had expected,

and he found it an easy matter to throw the old robe over the top of the sticks. Then he took his string and wove it around the poles about three feet from where they went into the ground, so that it would be firmer. He had this all completed when he saw Betty coming across the cotton-field. She was coming very slowly, and her arms were filled, while something trailed behind her at which she stopped to look every few steps. "Luke," she called, "oh, Luke, come and pick up the wild-beast's-skin."

Luke ran to meet her, and found that a long black rug was trailing behind her, while in her arms were her two dolls, a big shawl, and a tin pail.

Betty dropped her burdens as Luke reached her, and pointed proudly toward a much-worn bearskin rug.

"Wild-beast-skin," she said proudly. "Once 'twas a bear, but now it's all worn out, and my mother says we can have it for the wigwam."

"What's the pail for?" asked Luke, gathering up the shawl, the bearskin and the tin pail, and leaving Betty only the dolls to carry.

"Oh, that's to keep house with," said Betty. "Oh, Luke, I'll have to stoop way over to get into it," said Betty.

"Indians always do," replied Luke, who was busy fastening the bearskin over the back of the tent. The shawl covered one side and, although a goodly space remained open Betty said that she did not care, that she could play it was a window. But Luke insisted on cutting pine boughs and weaving them in and out until the only opening in the wigwam was the place left for a door. By the time this was done Luke had to hurry home to help his father, and Betty found it much pleasanter to sit just outside the wigwam than to stay in it. But she felt very proud of the new play-house, and "Margie" and "Betty" were sent in and out quite as if it was their own home.

Luke did not come back to the wigwam that day, but he had a plan which he had not told Betty. He had resolved to himself that when it got dark he would creep out of bed without awakening his father, and go up and sleep in the wigwam. He wished that there was some boy to go with him so they could play at being Indians, but he thought it would be almost an adventure to creep through the woods in the dark, crawl into the wigwam, roll himself up in a blanket, and sleep until morning.

It seemed a very long day, but Luke went to bed as early as he could. He got into bed without undress-

ing, and pulled the thin quilt over him. Mr. Sanders' bed was in the same room, but it seemed to Luke that his father would never come indoors and go to bed. But at last Mr. Sanders was safely in bed, and Luke began to listen for the faint snores which would assure him that his father was fast asleep. Luke slipped noiselessly out of bed, rolled up the thin quilt, and crept cautiously down the narrow, creaking stairway. A whispered word to the uneasy dogs and they became silent, and the boy was out of the house and running swiftly along toward the woods. As he reached the shadow of the big trees he thought he heard some one behind him, and stopped and looked back, but there was nothing to be seen, and Luke went on more slowly. Now he was a scout on the outlook for hostile Indians who must be near at hand, and he frequently ran behind a big tree, and peered out cautiously, as he imagined a scout might do. Once he was almost sure that he saw a figure moving among the trees, and with his heart beating more quickly than usual he hurried on toward the wigwam.

It looked very low and dark to Luke as he came near it, and when he had poked the quilt in and prepared to follow it through the opening he almost wished

that he was safe at home. What if some wild animal had crawled in there for a night's shelter? There were not any dangerous wild animals in the vicinity, but at the thought of them Luke paused and reached into his pocket for his one-bladed knife. Opening the blade and grasping the handle firmly Luke followed the quilt into the wigwam. The night was warm, there was but little air stirring, and it seemed very close to Luke, shut in by the shawl and bearskin rug. He found that the wigwam was hardly large enough for him to stretch himself out in comfort, and the ground seemed full of roots and uncomfortable places.

He had closed his knife and put it back in his pocket, and was trying to imagine himself an Indian chief when he heard steps outside the wigwam. The boy held his breath and listened. Some one was surely walking around the little camp. Then came a subdued laugh, which frightened Luke even more than the steps. He felt sure that it was a tramp who had wandered from the highway to sleep in the woods.

"He will try and crawl in here to sleep," thought Luke, "and I must get out."

The boy listened anxiously, but did not hear any further sounds. It grew very warm and he wished

that he had left the quilt at home. Finally he went to sleep. When he awoke he felt sure that it must be very near morning, and crawled out of the wigwam, pulling the quilt after him. It was so dark and still that Luke stood for a moment wondering what time it was. He wanted to get home before daylight, before his father should wake up and miss him.

"Dad would be frightened to wake up and find me gone," thought the boy, and quickly rolling up the quilt he started for home. It seemed a much longer distance than usual, and in the dark Luke stumbled over the roots of the trees, and once fell over a pile of brush. As he neared the house he gave a low whistle that the dogs might recognize him, and crept into the house and up the stairs. He slipped off his clothes and crept into bed. In a moment, he thought, his father would say it was time to get up, and Luke was very sleepy for a boy who had slept all night in the woods.

"Well, son," his father said in a moment, "got home all safe, didn't you?" and there came a chuckling laugh, such as Luke had heard when he lay in the wigwam.

"Oh, dad, how did you know?" asked Luke.

"Oh, I just followed you," replied Mr. Sanders.

"And then I really did see somebody in the woods, and somebody did walk around the wigwam?"

"I did," said Mr. Sanders.

"Is it most time to get up, dad?"

"The clock has just struck eleven, son."

"Oh, dad! wasn't I in that wigwam but an hour?"

"Just about an hour." Then there was a little silence, but after a moment a sleepy voice said,

"Dad, you won't tell!"

"No, sir," said Mr. Sanders.

CHAPTER IX

LUKE'S LESSONS

ONE morning a few days after Marjorie's departure for Ashley, Mrs. Philips was busy in the kitchen. Aunt Cora was needed to help in the garden, so the mistress of the house found many extra things to do. Her thoughts were very full of the little girl so far away, and when a firm knock on the side of the open kitchen door caused her to turn around she was pleased to see that it was Luke Sanders.

His hair was as smooth as water could make it, his faded shirt was clean, and Mrs. Philips noticed that he had on a pair of new jean trousers. In one hand he held the remains of an old straw hat, while the other grasped a large book. He looked up at Mrs. Philips with a bashful smile, and said:

"I s'pose you was lookin' for me before this, but I've had a good deal to do this week."

Mrs. Philips smiled, and wondered what the book was that Luke held so firmly.

"Margie said you'd hear my lessons," said the boy finally, laying the book on the window-sill. "She

said it was time I learned to do sums. I didn't have any book about 'rithmetic, but dad bought this at an auction once, and he says it's got figures in it."

Mrs. Philips for a moment hesitated. She had so much to do; how could she spare time for the task Margie had promised? But when she looked at the boy's wistful face, noticed the effort he had made to come as tidy and clean as possible, and remembered how little chance he had to learn, she resolved that she would find time.

"I must help this boy as I would wish any one to help my little girl," she thought, and picked up Luke's book and read the title, "Ancient and Modern Astrology."

"I am afraid this book will not be of much use to us," she said, with the kindly smile which always made Luke wish that Mrs. Philips was his mother; "but we shan't need a book at present."

Margie had forgotten to tell her mother of the promise to Luke, but Mrs. Philips did not wish the boy to know it.

"I have Margie's slate," she said, "and I will get it for you, and you can have your lesson right here by the window, while I finish my ironing."

She went for the slate, and sitting down by Luke

told him what figures represented and set him a good, clear copy. She found that he could count readily, and as she ironed she gave him simple problems in addition.

"Now," she said, "we will have a little lesson in mental arithmetic. If I iron one towel every two minutes, how many towels will I iron in an hour? There are sixty minutes in an hour, you know."

This seemed a great puzzle to Luke, and at first he was disposed to give it up. But Mrs. Philips would not listen to "giving up."

"Why," she said, "before Margie gets home, I shall expect you to tell me how many square feet there are in an acre, and all sorts of things. No giving up, Luke, when you begin anything worth while;" and after a few uncertain guesses Luke worked out the right answer to the problem, and was more pleased than Mrs. Philips herself.

"I s'pose I'll be learning grammar soon," said Luke hopefully, when the lesson time was over.

Then Mrs. Philips explained to him what "grammar" meant.

"We will take nouns and pronouns for our first lesson in grammar," she said.

"Nouns and pronouns," repeated Luke admiringly.

Luke came every day for his lesson

"And after this, Luke," she continued, "we will have our lesson begin at three in the afternoon. I will be on the side porch at that hour and you come right there."

"Yes'm," said the boy, looking up at her gratefully. "Ain't there something I can do for you, Mrs. Philips; you are so good to me, I'd do anything for you."

"There will be something you can do for me later on," said Mrs. Philips, resting her hand on the boy's shoulder, and feeling a little choking in her throat as she looked at his thin face. "Now, I baked some bread myself this morning, and I am going to wrap up a loaf for you to take home to surprise your father with; and to-morrow perhaps we will begin on nouns."

"Yes'm. Nouns and pro-nouns," said Luke.

Luke came promptly every day for his lesson, and however tired or busy Mrs. Philips might be, she was always ready for her pupil. When Margie wrote to Luke about making the wooden dogs for Ferdinand he came to Mrs. Philips with a sober face.

"Don't seem as if I ought to take money for whittling things out of wood," he said, "'specially when I do it 'cause I like to," but Mrs. Philips assured him

that it was perfectly right for Ferdinand to pay for the wooden dogs.

"Old 'Pointer' will look better in wood than Buff," explained Luke. "You see Pointer's nose and ears are easier to make; they are like this;" and with a few strokes of his slate pencil Luke drew old Pointer's head, and held it up for Mrs. Philips to see. "While Buff's head is like this;" and the pencil drew a likeness of Margie's puppy.

Mrs. Philips was silent for a moment as she looked at the slate.

"Margie wanted you to be an artist, didn't she, Luke?" she said at length.

"Yes'm," answered the boy, "but she's decided, since I gave her the wooden dog, that I'd better be a carpenter."

"Why did she want you to be an artist?" questioned Mrs. Philips.

"Because that lame boy was. The one her Aunt Maria taught to read, same as Margie taught me," explained Luke.

"Did Margie ever see you draw?"

"Why, I never did draw," said Luke. "Margie used to say there wasn't anybody to teach me; and she said she guessed I didn't look the way artists did."

Mrs. Philips smiled. "Well, this looks very much like 'Pointer,'" she said.

Luke laughed. "Margie says artists make beautiful pictures that look so much like real people that sometimes folks think it is real people. Did you ever see a picture like that, Mrs. Philips?"

"I have seen excellent portraits," she answered thoughtfully.

Betty came over sometimes in the late afternoons, and listened admiringly to Luke's lessons. Margie had written to Betty that she had a secret, that it could not be told until Mr. and Mrs. Philips came north, as it was to be a surprise for them; and something which would please them very much. She added that even her Aunt Maria did not know about it.

"What do you s'pose it is, Mrs. Philips?" Betty questioned eagerly.

"I cannot imagine," responded Mrs. Philips. "I have a secret myself," she continued with a little laugh, "and a surprise for Margie, too, and I can't even tell Betty."

Betty laughed and said she was going to have a secret herself, and that she wouldn't tell anybody. But in a few days she confided in Mrs. Philips that she and Grandma Savory had a lovely secret.

"Nobody is to know it until grandma comes again, and that will be the week before I go to Columbia," she said, "but I'll tell you a little bit about it. It's about Luke and the Clay boys."

"And I'll tell you a little bit about my secret," said Mrs. Philips. "My secret is about Luke, too."

Luke was present when these confidences were exchanged, and he immediately began to lay deep schemes to discover the secret about the Clay boys and himself. He questioned Betty vigorously, but not a word would she tell him.

"I hope you can go to school this fall, Luke," Mrs. Philips said one day. "The school at the corner does not begin until late in October. Don't you think your father would be willing for you to go?"

Betty was there that afternoon, and when Luke answered, "He'd be willing enough; but I don't want to go, for I haven't any decent clothes, and the other boys make fun of me;" then Betty had giggled, and her yellow braid swung rapidly back and forth. Luke looked at her reproachfully, and Betty's face sobered quickly. After Luke went home that day Betty told Mrs. Philips her secret, and was delighted when Mrs. Philips said she thought it was the nicest secret she had ever heard.

"Is it as good as yours?" Betty said, suggestively.

But Mrs. Philips only laughed and said, "Oh, my secret can not be told for ever so long. But I promise to tell you first."

"Before you do Margie?"

Mrs. Philips nodded. "Yes, before I tell Margie; because it is to be a surprise for her."

"Do you suppose my secret is as nice a one as Margie's?" questioned Betty.

"Why, I think it must be," replied Mrs. Philips.

"I thought about it first," explained Betty, "the day grandma said Luke was about as tall as the Clay boys; and when I told grandma that Luke didn't have any clothes 'cept now and then a shirt and his father's old trousers, why then grandma thought of it too. And she said right off that the Clay boys didn't half wear out their clothes, and that 'twas a shame, grandma said. And after she went back to Columbia she talked with Mrs. Clay, and grandma wrote me a letter and said that Mrs. Clay had given her two sets of everything. Think of Luke having two hats!" and Betty jumped up and down and giggled again. "I guess Margie would feel real encouraged about Luke's being an artist if she knew that," she added.

"I am sure she would," agreed Mrs. Philips.

"Father said the Sanders were all dreadful high-spirited. He said he'd bet Luke wouldn't touch the things with a ten foot pole."

"Oh," Mrs. Philips' tone was puzzled and disappointed. "Then we must plan to have Luke pay for the things," she said. "They are just what he will need for school."

"I thought about that when he said he hadn't any clothes. That's what made me giggle," said Betty, "for grandma will come in about a week, and then he will have lots of clothes, if he will take them."

"Luke is so generous himself that I believe he will take them. And when your grandma comes, dear Betty, you can give Luke the things yourself, and tell him all about it just as you have me."

"I'm going to write Margie about it, too," said Betty. "You see it will make her think of the folks that helped Arthur Field, won't it?"

"Yes, perhaps it will," smilingly agreed Mrs. Philips.

CHAPTER X

A PICNIC AT THE PINES

THE two dolls which Aunt Maria had told Margie about proved to be beautiful creatures. One was a china doll with black curls, and unusually red lips and cheeks. Her hands and feet were also of china. Her body was of kid, and all her clothes could be put on and off. Her white muslin gown had become a creamy shade which Margie thought much prettier than a fresh white dress would be.

"What is her name?" asked Margie, holding up her new treasure admiringly.

"Her name is Georgianna Violet," said Miss Wing.

"That's a lovely name," said Margie, setting Georgianna Violet carefully up against the pillows on Aunt Maria's bed, and turning to look at the other doll which Aunt Maria had taken out of the bureau drawer.

This doll was of wax; her hair was yellow and her eyes were blue, and her name sounded very fine; it was Rosamund Antoinette. When Margie heard these beautiful names she could not but feel sorry that Luke

Sanders had named her puppy Buff; and she was greatly surprised when her Aunt Maria said that she thought "Buff" a far better name for a dog than "Napoleon."

"Perhaps a girl nearly ten ought not to play with dolls," she said rather soberly to her aunt. "Did you play with dolls when you were as old as I am, Aunt Maria?"

"My dear child, I played with dolls until I was nearly fifteen years old," said Aunt Maria; "and I think ten is just the nicest age to really enjoy dolls. When I write to your mother I shall tell her to bring all your dolls in her trunk."

Margie smiled happily. "My," she said, "that will be six dolls!"

"A large family," remarked Miss Wing seriously.

When Ferdinand received his invitation to the party he came over to inquire if Buff was to go; and on being told that he was, said that he guessed he would come. He looked at Margie's dolls in smiling amazement.

"I'd rather have Buff," he said. "Dolls can't play with you, or run, or do anything."

"But they are lovely to make believe with," said Margie. "You can play that they are queens, or sis-

ters, or that they are children, or company or anything."

"Well, you can play that a dog is a wild tiger or a lion, and when he runs after you that your life is in peril," said Ferdinand. "Why, I'd rather have wooden dogs like the one Luke gave you than dolls. You could play menagerie with wooden animals."

The day of the dolls' party proved bright and pleasant. Each little girl had brought two dolls. Ferdinand was the first guest to arrive, and as he helped with the ice cream freezer and promised to keep an eye on Buff, Miss Wing decided that one boy in the party was very acceptable.

The ice cream freezer and the baskets with the sandwiches and cakes were carried to a group of trees which Miss Wing called the "dining-room," and the little party gathered in the shade of the "library." Here each little girl selected a tree as a house for her dolls, and they went calling upon each other from tree to tree. Margie received the most calls, because all the little girls wanted to see Georgianna Violet and Rosamund Antoinette, and look at their old-fashioned dresses.

The afternoon passed delightfully, and about five o'clock Miss Wing called them all to the "dining-

room" and they enjoyed the ice cream and goodies she had ready for them. Ferdinand was very quiet all through supper-time. Buff kept very close to him, apparently tired out, for during the afternoon he had run busily about. Once he had seized a doll belonging to Ada Streeter, and it had caused great excitement until Margie captured the doll and restored it safely to its frightened owner.

As they were finishing their cakes Ferdinand Webb took something out of his pocket and examined it carefully. It was rolled up in his handkerchief; and after looking at it a moment he scrambled to his feet and going up to where Miss Wing was busy packing up the baskets, he said,

"Miss Wing, I've got a nice bonfire all ready, and if you'd like to have me, I'll light it, without a match."

"Mercy sakes!" exclaimed Miss Wing. "All my life I have watched these trees to be sure no fire came near them ——"

"Oh," interrupted Ferdinand, "I know that; my father has always told me about being careful about wood-lots, especially your pines, Miss Wing. My bonfire is down on the edge of the ploughed ground. It isn't so much the fire I want to show you, as the way I'm going to light it," explained Ferdinand.

"Well, then we will all go down and see your wonderful match," said Miss Wing.

"But it isn't a match at all," persisted Ferdinand; "it's a lot more interesting than a little sliver of a match. You wait and see, Miss Wing."

The little girls were all wondering how Ferdinand could light a fire without a match. Josie Stevens said that she knew, that her grandmother had told her how people used to strike fire with flint and steel.

"Oh, no," said Ferdinand, "it isn't that."

When the girls reached the pile of brush which Ferdinand had gathered in the lower field they stood about and watched him make his preparations for his mysterious fire.

From his pocket he took the treasured handkerchief, unrolled it and displayed a brown, spongy substance as large as a silver half-dollar.

"That's punk," he announced.

"Punk?" queried Margie. "What is punk?"

"Oh, I guess it's a kind of rotten wood," explained Ferdinand. "It grows on old stumps. Sometimes it shines in the night and folks call it 'fox-fire.'"

He did not add that it had taken him all day Friday to find the small quantity which he displayed so proudly.

Ferdinand now took from another pocket two pieces of smooth wood and began to rub them briskly together, holding them close to the punk. He worked vigorously for several minutes, and finally a spark sprang from the heated wood and settled on the punk. He now gave all his attention to encouraging the spark, and placing the punk in a bed of light shavings and birch bark under the edge of the bush heap soon started a crackling blaze.

"There," exclaimed Ferdinand proudly, his face red from so much puffing and blowing; "that's what Indians and trappers do when they are lost in the woods and haven't any matches and are almost ready to freeze to death. I read about it in a book, and I've worked it twice before."

The little girls thought it very wonderful, and when Margie next wrote to Luke she told him about the wonderful punk, and added the information which Ferdinand had given her that, after punk was lighted, it would smoulder an entire day and night unless kindled by exposing it to a draught. This seemed very remarkable to Margie. She was sure Luke could find quantities of punk along the edges of the Saluda Swamp.

A few weeks after the dolls' party school began, and Margie found that Ada Streeter was to be her seat-mate. Ever since the dolls' party the two little girls had been very friendly, and Margie was glad to sit next Ada in school. They had established a secret post-office under a large rock half-way between their houses. Aunt Maria told Margie one day that, when she was a little girl she and Ada Streeter's mother had had a place near the big rock where they left notes for each other; so Margie had lost no time in proposing to Ada that they should also have a post-office. "Then when we grow up we can tell our little girls about it just as Aunt Maria told me," Margie said, and Ada agreed.

It was sometimes difficult for Margie to keep her mind on her lessons, for she was now counting the weeks before her mother and father would reach Ashley, and her mind was full of a delightful surprise that she was planning for them. She had confided in Ada in regard to her plan, and in the daily notes which were tucked under the rock the "secret" was often referred to.

One Saturday morning Miss Wing told Marjorie that they had been invited to spend the day with some friends who lived on a farm just outside the village.

"Mr. Wyman will drive in after us about ten o'clock," she said, "and we must be all ready and not keep him waiting."

"Can Buff go?" Margie asked eagerly.

Miss Wing shook her head. "I am afraid there are too many chickens and ducks and kittens at Mr. Wyman's, and that Buff might get into trouble," she said.

Margie had heard a great deal about Mr. Wyman. He and her Grandfather Wing had been schoolboys together, and when her mother and Aunt Maria were little girls they used to go out to the farm to spend the day just as Margie was going.

It was just ten o'clock when Mr. Wyman stopped his big brown horse at Aunt Maria's front gate, and he nodded his approval to find Miss Wing and Marjorie all ready to start.

"So this is little Miss Marjorie," he said, holding out his hand to the little girl, and Margie smiled up at him, and wished that Betty could be there.

Mr. Wyman had very white hair and whiskers, and he was so stout that he seemed to nearly fill the front seat. After he had told Margie about what her mother used to do when she visited the farm, he

turned to Miss Wing and said, "Well, what do you hear about Arthur Field nowadays?"

"Oh," said Miss Wing, "he is South now, and on his way home he may stop and visit Marjorie's mother."

"Oh, Aunt Maria, you never told me that," said Margie.

"Why, I believe I didn't," responded Miss Wing, with a little laugh. "You see I didn't know it until the other day."

"'Twill do him good to get where it's warmer," said Mr. Wyman. "And I s'pose he can paint pictures wherever he is."

Margie sighed as she thought about Arthur Field. If Luke could only have been an artist instead of a carpenter perhaps Arthur Field would have become interested in him, and Luke would have grown up just like him; only of course Luke would not be lame. But she had little time to think about it, for they soon reached the farm; and when they went into the big kitchen Margie thought that it was the nicest kitchen that ever was. Aunt Maria said that everything was just the same as it had been when she was a little girl.

Mr. Wyman asked Margie if she would like to know

what her mother had liked to do best of all when she came to the farm? and when she said, "Yes," he brought in a big basket heaped full of shining ears of corn. Then he brought out a fire-shovel and a small tub. Margie laughed when he laid the shovel across the tub with the handle resting on the floor, and began to draw the ears of corn across the edges while the kernels fell into the tub.

Then Mr. Wyman took the corn-cobs and told Margie that when her mother was a little girl she used to build forts and houses with corn-cobs; and he showed her how to make real log-cabins, "such as my mother lived in when she was your age," he said.

"Oh, I wish I had brought my dolls to put in these houses," said Margie.

"Well, you must bring them next time," he said.

After luncheon Mr. Wyman took them through the big barns.

"I'm glad Buff didn't come," said Margie, as a jet black kitten scampered by them. "You see cats don't seem to like Buff," she explained to Mr. Wyman.

"Then he'd have a pretty hard time out here," said Mr. Wyman; "for I've got seven cats, and most of them black."

On the drive home Mr. Wyman and Miss Wing

talked about Arthur Field, and Margie listened eagerly. It seemed to her a very wonderful thing to be an artist and paint pictures; and she thought how proud Aunt Maria must be that she had taught him to read, and helped him to learn to draw.

"I taught Luke to read, too," she thought to herself; "but I guess it isn't going to turn out just as I thought it would. Being a carpenter isn't what I expected of him."

CHAPTER XI

A DAY OF DELIGHTS

"MARGIE, Margie," called Aunt Maria very early one morning about a week after the visit to Farmer Wyman's, "get up, my dear. For what do you suppose has happened? We are invited to spend the day in Boston with Mrs. Melchin."

"Who is Mrs. Melchin?" questioned Margie eagerly, as she jumped out of bed; "and why didn't she ask us before?"

"Come right down to breakfast," responded Aunt Maria, "and I will tell you all about it;" and in a few moments Margie was sitting at the breakfast-table.

"Mrs. Melchin," said Aunt Maria, "lives in a beautiful house on Beacon Street in Boston, and she is an old lady. She was a friend of your grandmother's, and when your mother and I were little girls we were sometimes invited to go in and spend a day with Mrs. Melchin just as we are invited to-day. Only in those days we used to be asked by a letter, but this invitation came by telephone."

"Did you like to go and visit her?" questioned Margie, with a little tone in her voice as if she herself did not care much about the visit.

"Like to go!" exclaimed Aunt Maria. "Indeed we did! We used to think and talk about it for weeks after a day with Mrs. Melchin; and I want to take the nine o'clock train this morning so that we can have a lovely long day with her."

"What did you and mamma do when you went to see Mrs. Melchin?" asked Margie.

"Wait and see," said Miss Maria, with a little nod of her head, which made Margie sure that something very pleasant must be in store for her.

The day was warm, and Aunt Maria wore the pretty gray dress which Margie always admired, and the pink cameo brooch. Margie wore a white dress, and her best hat. Aunt Maria said that Mrs. Melchin always liked to see little girls in white; and Margie began to think that Mrs. Melchin must be a very particular old lady if Aunt Maria was so careful to please her. Margie almost wished that she could stay at home and play with her dolls on the shady piazza; but she remembered Aunt Maria's nod, and wondered what delightful surprise could be in store for her at the beautiful house on Beacon Street.

When they reached Boston they walked through the long railway station and then through a narrow street, and came out directly opposite to a beautiful garden.

"Oh!" said Margie eagerly, "is this Mrs. Melchin's garden?"

"No, indeed," said Aunt Maria, with a little laugh, "these are the Public Gardens, and they belong to every one in Boston."

Then Margie noticed that a great many people were walking about under the trees. They walked across the gardens and over a bridge where they stopped a moment to watch the swan boats.

"Oh, auntie, can't I, can't I have a ride behind one of those big birds? See, there are children on that one!" said Margie, as the boats with the big wooden swans carved in front paddled near the bridge.

"Why, I think we have time," said Aunt Maria; "and I believe I would like to go myself." And they went down the broad stone steps which led from the bridge to the boat landing. Another boat was about to start for its cruise around the tiny lake, and Aunt Maria gave the boatman ten cents and she and Margie took a seat right behind the wooden swans.

"Isn't this lovely?" said Margie happily. "Is

there anything at Mrs. Melchin's house as nice as this?" and again Aunt Maria nodded her head and said,

"Wait and see."

"Oh, Aunt Maria, as soon as Luke gets to be a carpenter perhaps he can make a boat just like this," said Margie.

"I have no doubt that he could," agreed Aunt Maria.

"I will write and tell him all about it," said Margie.

It did not take very long to go under the bridge, around the tiny island and back to the landing-place, and when Margie stepped on shore she looked back admiringly at the swan boat. As they started to go up the steps to the bridge Margie noticed two little girls sitting on one of the steps and watching the boats as they started out. These little girls were bare-headed, and one of them had bare feet. Their cotton dresses were not very clean. They sat there very quietly, and when Margie and her aunt came along the children moved nearer the water to make room.

"They look just as if they wanted a sail," whispered Margie.

"Why, so they do," said Aunt Maria; and she stopped near the little girls and said, "Have you ever had a sail around the lake?"

The larger of the two looked up and answered quickly, "Oh, no, ma'am! Why, it costs five cents!"

The other little girl said, "It costs ten cents for two."

"So it does," responded Aunt Maria; "and I am going to pay your fares so you can enjoy it as much as this little girl did."

"Oh!" said the smaller child, turning a look of delight upon her sister.

"It's lovely," said Margie, as the two girls sprang up and stood eagerly waiting to see what would happen next.

Aunt Maria went back to the boat landing and saw the children started on their unexpected pleasure trip, and she and Margie waved their hands to them as the boat started off.

"Didn't they look happy?" said Margie. "Someway I feel glad, too."

"Of course you do!" replied Aunt Maria. "Happiness is contagious, just like the measles!"

"We are having such a good time now," said Margie. "Will we have any better time when we get to Mrs. Melchin's house?"

And again Aunt Maria said, "Wait and see!"

They left the gardens and walked up a long hill, and when they had nearly reached the top Aunt Maria stopped in front of a tall brick house and rang the bell. Margie stood very close to her aunt. She felt as if something remarkable was about to happen.

The door was opened by a tall, solemn-looking man. Margie wondered if this was Mr. Melchin, but just then her aunt said, "Good-morning, Billings. Will you tell Mrs. Melchin that Miss Wing and Miss Marjorie have come."

"Yes, Miss Wing; Mrs. Melchin is expecting you. She said you were to step right up-stairs, if you please, miss, and that the little girl was to wait in the library a moment, if you please, ma'am."

"Very well, Billings," said Miss Wing, and Billings drew back some heavy curtains at the end of the hall.

"Run in there, dear, for a moment," said Aunt Maria. "Billings will tell you when to come up-stairs."

When Marjorie went into the library she did not see any one there. It was a large room with book shelves all around the walls. At the farther end of the room was a large bay-window, and Margie walked toward it and looked out. The window overlooked a

long narrow garden where several trees grew. As Margie stood there looking out she heard a voice say,

"Why, good-morning!"

Margie looked about, thinking some one had come into the room. She did not see any one, but she said "Good-morning."

"Nice morning!" said the voice.

"Yes'm," said Margie.

"Nice morning," said the voice again.

Margie decided that her reply had not been heard, so she said again in a louder tone,

"Yes'm," and looked around the room more carefully. She thought perhaps Mrs. Melchin had come down-stairs after all, but as she could not see any one she began to feel a little frightened and went near the door and sat down in a big leather-covered chair.

"Sit down, sit down," said the voice.

"Yes'm," replied Margie. "I have."

"Take a seat, sit down," continued the voice.

"Oh, dear, I guess she's deaf," thought the little girl, and trying to speak very distinctly, she said,

"Yes'm. I am sitting right near the door."

"Well, well," said the voice.

Margie began to wish that Aunt Maria would come. She thought to herself that it was not very polite for

this person, whoever it might be, not to sit where her visitor could see her.

Just then Billings drew back the curtains and said, "You are to step up-stairs, miss, if you please," and Margie followed him up the stairs and to a large room directly over the library.

"This is Marjorie," said Aunt Maria, coming to meet her and leading her toward a silver-haired old lady who sat in a high-backed chair near a small table. Margie noticed that Mrs. Melchin's eyes were very soft and black, and that the hand she extended to the little girl was covered with shining rings.

"Sit down near me, dear," said the old lady, after Aunt Maria had taken off Margie's hat. "I wonder if you saw the parrot in the library?"

"Oh," said Margie, with a little gasp. "Was that a parrot that talked to me?" She was so surprised that Aunt Maria and Mrs. Melchin both laughed.

"Yes, my dear," said Mrs. Melchin. "What do you think of an old lady who is so lonesome that she has three parrots to talk to her? The one in the library is named 'Pickwick,' the one in the dining-room I call 'Nero,' and that one which you see on his perch in the window is 'Beauty.'"

Margie looked toward the window and saw a beautiful bird swinging in the window.

"Oh," she said.

"Go and talk to him if you wish to," said Mrs. Melchin, and Margie walked slowly toward the window. But "Beauty" would not talk, so Margie looked about the room. As she looked she remembered that Aunt Maria had said that Mrs. Melchin had a beautiful house, and the little girl thought that this room was very beautiful. The walls were covered with silk hangings which looked very soft and lovely. Low cabinets stood here and there, and Margie saw that the one nearest to where she was standing was full of beautifully carved tiny elephants. The largest elephant was perhaps an inch high, and on his back was a ball of crystal. There were tiny figures on the backs of the other elephants, and as Margie looked at them she wished that Luke could see them.

After looking at these Margie went to the next cabinet, and here were the queerest little figures of Chinamen and of all sorts of people. None of them were over an inch high, and all looked so real, so much like tiny living people that Margie said a little soft "oh," under her breath. There was another cabinet and this was full of birds, carved just as the

elephants and people were, out of yellowish ivory. There were parrots, robins, cranes, eagles, and many birds whose names Margie did not know.

Before Margie had finished looking at these Mrs. Melchin said, "Now, my dears, we will have lunch, and Margie shall see 'Nero.'"

When they went into the dining-room "Nero" called out, "All ready for luncheon."

"Nero" was not as handsome a bird as "Beauty," and Mrs. Melchin said he was sometimes cross.

"That is why I keep him in a cage," she said. "'Pickwick' doesn't mind having his head smoothed occasionally, and 'Beauty' likes a little attention of that sort, but 'Nero' snaps that sharp beak of his at every one who goes near him."

Margie thought she had never had such a nice luncheon before. There were small melons, filled with little pieces of ice and sprinkled with sugar. There were fat little chops with white frilled paper around them, and there was creamed potato, with red tomatoes, and crisp bread sticks. After these were eaten Billings brought in ices which looked like ripe peaches and which tasted like strawberries, and were so cool and delicious that Margie had two whole peaches. And with these were all sorts of small cakes.

While they were eating "Nero" had a good deal to say.

"Coffee ought to be hot," he said several times, and made a queer noise which sounded like the rattling of knives and forks against china.

After luncheon while Mrs. Melchin and Aunt Maria were looking at a new set of china Margie went close up to the bird's cage and said, "Nero!"

"Well, well," said the bird turning its head on one side and looking at her with its bead-like eyes.

This made Margie laugh, and, forgetting that Mrs. Melchin had said that "Nero" did not like people very near him, she went close to his cage and said, "Nero want his luncheon?"

"No coffee," said "Nero," and Margie laughed with delight, and putting her hand between the bars of his cage tried to smooth his soft plumage.

In an instant the bird had made a snap at her hand, and although Margie drew it out quickly the parrot had made an ugly nip at the soft flesh and Margie screamed with pain.

Aunt Maria and Mrs. Melchin hurried to her side, and Aunt Maria wrapped her handkerchief around the wounded hand, and they all hurried up-stairs, where the wound was carefully bathed and bandaged.

Neither Mrs. Melchin nor Aunt Maria said a word of blame to the little girl, but comforted her as best they could.

Mrs. Melchin asked Aunt Maria if she remembered the doll trunk.

"Indeed I do," said Aunt Maria. "I was hoping you would remember it," continued Aunt Maria, "for I really think it would make me young again to see those dolls."

"Why, you are nothing but a girl now," said Mrs. Melchin.

Mrs. Melchin sent for Billings and told him to bring down the trunk which stood in a closet in the blue room, and in a few moments he came back with a high, narrow trunk. He lifted the lid and took out a tray. In this tray was a doll dressed like a Chinese lady, another dressed like a Norwegian peasant, and a doll in a Holland costume. As Mrs. Melchin lifted each doll from its place she told Margie what country it came from. There were ten dolls in all, and in looking at them Margie forgot all about the hurt hand. Aunt Maria seemed to enjoy them as much as Margie did.

The afternoon passed so quickly that when Aunt Maria said that it was nearly five o'clock, and that

they must start for home, Margie could hardly realize that the day was gone. She told Mrs. Melchin that she had had a lovely time.

"All but 'Nero's' bite," said Mrs. Melchin.

"But you told me he did not like to have people touch him," said Margie. "I guess it was my fault."

"And will you come again?" asked Mrs. Melchin.

"Oh, yes, indeed," said Margie.

As they went down the hill Margie said,

"Oh, Aunt Maria, didn't we have the nicest time! When will we go again?"

"Why, we will go again just as soon as Mrs. Melchin asks us!" said Aunt Maria, with a little laugh.

CHAPTER XII

LUKE'S LUCK

GRANDMA SAVORY arrived at the plantation the last week in August. Beside her trunk she brought a good-sized bundle, and when it was taken out of the carriage she said to Betty, who was dancing about on the porch, "There is our surprise, my dear. Two of everything except shoes and stockings."

Betty had thought of various plans to prepare Luke for his good fortune, but none of her plans seemed just the thing. Her grandmother finally suggested that Betty ask Luke to come up to the house the next afternoon.

"I will tell him about the Clay boys and their dogs," she said, "and then I can bring it about some way."

"You mean the Clay boys' Sam Barnard?" questioned Betty jumping up and down beside her grandma's chair.

"Oh, yes, their Saint Bernard, old Hero, and the two new dogs that you haven't seen. They are twin dogs just as the boys are twins. A pedlar had them

on his wagon, and when the boys saw them they made a bargain, and got the two for five dollars. The boys think everything of them and old Hero seems to like their company."

So it was decided that Betty should go over to Mrs. Philips' about the time Luke came for his lesson and ask him to go home with her and hear about the Clay boys' dogs. She found him on the porch with Mrs. Philips. Luke had just received Margie's letter telling about the punk, and was discussing it with Mrs. Philips.

"I believe I know just where to get a lot of it; down around those old cedar stumps at the edge of the swamp. It'll save lots of matches, won't it, for I can keep the punk just smoldering, same as Margie writes about, and then whenever we want to light a fire we can blow it up into a blaze."

Just as he finished Betty came dancing up the path. "My grandma has come," said Betty, and a look of understanding passed between her and Mrs. Philips, "and she says the Clay boys have two new dogs, twins; they bought them of a pedlar."

Luke folded up Margie's letter.

"When did they buy the dogs?" he asked anxiously.

"Oh, about two months ago," said Betty.

"I'll bet it's Spot and Stripe," exclaimed Luke. "Did your grandma say what kind of dogs they were?"

"No," said Betty; "but if you come home with me she will tell you all about them."

Luke looked at Mrs. Philips for permission, as his lessons had just begun.

"Why, yes," she said in response to his look, "I think you can miss to-day's lesson, and study a little longer at home."

"Yes, ma'am, I will," said Luke. "It seems as if I must find out if the Clay boys have bought my dogs. Oh, I hope they have, for Betty says they like dogs."

"Yes, just the same as you do, Luke," answered Betty; and the two hurried away along the path by the cotton-field toward the Savory plantation.

"I never thought about Spot and Stripe," said Betty eagerly; "but buying them of a pedlar looks that way." In fact Betty had almost forgotten her "surprise" for Luke in this possible discovery. Grandma was waiting for them in the cool sitting-room, and on the little round table beside her stood a glass pitcher filled with lemonade, and beside it three glasses.

"How do you do, Luke?" she said pleasantly, and

she noticed approvingly the boy's clear eyes and polite bow. Both the children were very warm, and when grandma gave them each a glass of lemonade they thought nothing had ever tasted so good.

"I came to ask about the Clay boys' dogs," said Luke. "Are they brown setter dogs with white spots?"

"Why, yes," responded Mrs. Savory, "I believe they are."

"And do you know if the man they bought them of had a black beard, and long teeth, and a big nose, and two skinny old horses?"

Mrs. Savory laughed a little at Luke's description.

"No, I don't know how he looked, but the boys said he was a foreigner and that his horses looked tired and half fed; I know George Clay said he would liked to have bought the horses also."

Luke settled back in his chair and smiled a little. "I believe those were my dogs," he said, and then Grandma Savory listened to the story of Spot and Stripe, and heard also about Buff, who had gone to Massachusetts with Margie.

"Do you feel as if the dogs belonged to you now, Luke?" she asked, when he, with Betty's assistance, had finished the story.

"No, ma'am," said Luke slowly, "I don't know as I do, now that I know they have a good home and that the Clay boys own them. If the old pedlar had kept them, or sold them where they were abused, I should have tried to get them back; but I guess the Clay boys can do a sight more for them than I could."

Grandma took off her glasses and rubbed them briskly, and then looked at Luke more kindly than ever.

"I don't know how the Clay boys will feel," she said. "You know they are real Southern boys, Luke, just as you are, and if they felt the dogs were yours, they would want to pay you for them. The Clay boys don't have very much money, either. The five dollars they paid the pedlar, I happen to know, took all the spending money they will have for three months," and grandma sighed a little as if she was very sorry for the Clay boys.

"Well, then they mustn't know a thing about it," said Luke. "They didn't know the dogs were stolen, and they needn't know. You see the man did throw me a dollar—my dad has it now—and so perhaps I haven't any right to them anyway."

But grandma still looked doubtful.

"Let me see," she said, "if I can't think of some way out of it. I think that you and George Clay are just about of a height; he is a stouter boy than you are."

"Yes'm," said Luke, wondering what this had to do with Spot and Stripe.

"Now it happens," continued grandma, "that Mrs. Clay has given me two suits of clothes that are a tight fit for the twins, and I brought them down here. Now suppose you take these clothes in pay for the dogs. Then you will feel satisfied, and then if the twins ever know about Spot and Stripe they will feel that they really belong to them." And grandma again took off her glasses, and waited.

Luke did not answer for a moment. Two suits of clothes, he thought—had ever such good fortune come to a boy who had already earned fifty cents just by whittling out wooden dogs! With two suits of clothes he could not only go to school, but, remembering Mrs. Philips' kindly encouragement, why could he not begin to try to be a carpenter, or an artist, as Margie had always wanted him to be?

It was so long before Luke answered that grandma and Betty began to be a little anxious, and Betty's yellow braid danced from one shoulder to the other

as she kept turning her head first toward grandma, and then toward Luke.

When he did answer, his voice seemed to choke a little and all he said was, "Yes, ma'am."

"Of course," responded Grandma Savory. "Now you and the Clay boys will be square whatever happens. Betty, do you think you could bring down that bundle on top of my trunk? Luke might like to take the things now."

"Oh, yes indeed," said Betty, and she skipped out of the room.

"Do you know what the Clay boys call the dogs?" asked Luke.

At this grandma sighed in relief; she felt that "Betty's surprise" was a real success.

"I don't think the names they have as suitable as those you gave them," she answered. "One dog they have named 'Tramp,' and the other 'Boots.'"

"Oh, dear," said Luke, moving uneasily in his chair. "I don't see how they could, when the puppies were so silky and pretty."

"I don't either," agreed grandma heartily; "and now that the dogs are really and properly paid for why can't I tell the twins all about it? About you,

I mean, and have them call the dogs 'Spot' and 'Stripe,' again?"

"Why, I should like to have you," said Luke soberly, picking up the bundle Betty had brought in. He stood a moment looking down at his bare feet, and then turning toward Grandma Savory he said, with his freckled cheeks flushing, "You think the dogs are worth it?"

"Indeed, I do," she responded; and with a little bob of his head, Luke said, "Good-bye," and started for home.

When he got about half-way through the pine woods, near where he had once sat making leather collars for Spot and Stripe, he put down his bundle and proceeded to unwrap it. He took out a neat suit of gray cloth; with it was a cap of the same material. Under this lay neatly folded a suit of dark-blue serge. Two striped linen shirts were at the bottom of the bundle and several white linen collars, and a blue necktie. Luke gazed at these treasures in admiration. As he sat looking at them he recalled his one term of school, and his own humiliation at his ragged shirt and trousers and bare feet. He remembered the silver dollar and his fifty cents now with satisfaction. "It will help buy shoes and stockings," he thought:

"and with these clothes of course I can't go barefoot. I must get some work so as to earn another dollar," and he looked again at his new possessions. As he looked a few tears crept down his cheeks, but he brushed them quickly away. "I s'pose it's because I never had nothing before that I feel so choked up and funny," he said to himself, as he tied up the bundle and started for home.

"I'll bet I can learn right fast in these clothes," he thought, a little smile coming about his mouth. "I guess Margie would be real pleased to see these clothes. I wonder what carpenters learn first? I must ask dad."

CHAPTER XIII

SALUDA SWAMP

When Luke received Margie's letter telling of her wonderful visit to Mrs. Melchin, and about the carved elephants, and tiny figures of men and birds, he resolved that he would try to make some tiny wooden birds for Mrs. Philips. "I guess she won't keep them in glass cases," he thought, "but perhaps she'd like to have them;" and the boy began to pass many quiet hours closely observing the mocking-birds, which came in flocks to the woods near the swamp, and he watched anxiously for a sight of the redbird; as he wanted the birds he made to be as nearly like the real birds as possible.

Saluda Swamp was considered a very dangerous place. There were small hummocks of long grass, old stumps half-hidden by the water, and here and there smooth stretches of brown earth that looked like solid ground but which were really dangerous quicksands. Now and then cattle that had escaped from their pasture had wandered into this swamp and

had been swallowed up, and children were always cautioned to keep away from this spot.

It was a favorite place with the birds. The redbirds nested in some of the dead trees that bent over one side of the swamp, and Luke knew that here he could watch them; and one afternoon he resolved to go very near the swamp and see if he could not get near enough to one of these birds so that he could be sure of the shape of its wings, and of its manner of perching upon a bough.

He had not told his father where he was going, as he expected to be at home long before supper-time. Near the edge of the swamp were a number of pine stumps, half hidden by the tall grass, and on one of these Luke sat down and looked around for his redbird. As he looked he noticed on a stump a short distance from him a brown growth which he immediately decided must be punk, and he resolved to secure it. Between the place where he sat and the stump where the punk grew was a stretch of the smooth brown earth. Luke knew what it was very well, but was sure that he could easily jump from one stump to another.

When he sprang across his jump carried him a little too far, and he landed in the water on the further side

of the punk stump. But as he was barefoot and his trousers were rolled up above his knees, he did not much care, and crawled up to the big roots and examined what he had thought to be punk. But it proved entirely different from the bit Margie had sent him, and Luke sat down on the stump and began to think more about getting punk than he did about watching for birds. He looked closely at the stumps near at hand, but could not see any trace of punk. Further out in the swamp, surrounded by several hummocks of tall grass, was a little group of dead trees, and Luke felt sure that on these he would find punk.

But how was he to get to them? Between the stump where he sat and the hummocks of grass were several stretches of water. This water looked shallow and easy to wade across, but Luke knew that its looks were deceptive, and that it would be dangerous for him to attempt to wade. There were stumps half covered by water, and Luke thought that by jumping from one stump to another he could reach the bunch of dead trees safely.

"I'm sure there's punk on those trees," thought the boy, "and I could get a lot and put it inside my shirt. I guess I ought to be smart enough to make a jump

like that," and he stood up on his stump and looked hopefully toward one about five feet distant, and nearly covered with water.

Luke made the jump successfully, but the rotten wood crumbled a little as the boy came solidly down on it. Whenever he moved his feet it crumbled more; and, with only a moment's pause, he jumped again, landing this time on a ragged stump whose sharp splinters hurt his bare feet. But he found comfortable standing room and looked ahead.

Two more jumps and he could reach the bunch of trees. They were both longer jumps than those he had taken, but Luke felt that he must go ahead. He chuckled a little to himself to think that he had ever been afraid of the swamp.

"It would be easy enough to go across," he said. "I'll be half way when I get to the dead trees." But now it was the brown treacherous earth instead of water over which he must jump. Again he drew his feet together and sprang forward, and this time he came a little short of the mark. His feet struck in the soft earth, but his hands caught the top of the stump and he pulled himself quickly up.

"Gee!" he said, looking back, "that's worse than water." For the earth had seemed to grasp at his

feet and legs as if to pull him down, and it had taken all his strength to pull himself up on to the stump.

"One more now," and again the boy sprang forward, this time for one of the solid-looking grass hummocks near the dead trees.

As his feet touched it he felt the hummock sink beneath him. In a moment the grass was partly covered by water; Luke heard a gurgling sound, and felt the water about his ankles. If he could only get to the next hummock he would be within reach of the trees. With a desperate effort he pulled out one foot and set it on the next hummock and drew the other after him. But this hummock began to sink just as the boy grasped at a dead branch which bent toward him.

He felt it bend and crack, but fortunately it did not break, and Luke was able to pull himself to a secure footing on the roots of the dead trees.

"Gee," said the boy again. Even yet he did not realize his dangerous position and began to look about him for punk. Sure enough, here was an abundance of it, and Luke wished that Ferdinand Webb could see how plenty punk was about Margie's old home, and how easy to get.

After he had secured as much as he could carry inside his cotton shirt, he began to remember about the

redbirds. One or two had flitted by him, and now, as he sat down on the big root of an old tree and leaned back against the half-decayed trunk, he saw one light almost within his reach.

The bird tilted its pretty head as if wondering what Luke was; but the boy kept very still, and the bird evidently decided that he was a part of the tree, and so did not fly away, but sent its musical notes out upon the quiet air.

After watching the bird until it flew away, Luke began to think of getting back to solid ground. As yet he had not felt frightened, but now as he looked at the grass hummocks and realized that this time he must make a jump of at least twelve feet in order to reach the first stump, he knew that he was in a dangerous position.

"I guess it's pretty near supper-time," he thought with a little feeling of homesickness. "I s'pose dad will think I'm at Betty's and won't look for me." And remembering this Luke began to get frightened. He could not get back to solid land without help. The swamp was nearly a mile from his father's house, and even when Mr. Sanders missed his son he would not think of coming to the swamp in search of him. Luke remembered now how many times his father

had warned him about the dangers of Saluda Swamp.

"I guess I'd better holler," thought Luke, and as he called the echo sent his voice back in so many different notes that it sounded as if a score of voices were calling "help" from every side of the swamp.

The echoes died away, and the frightened boy began to remember all the trouble Saluda Swamp had caused. There was the spotted calf of Mr. Savory's which had strayed into the quicksands right near the shore, and had been swallowed up. And a cow belonging to Mr. Philips had started out to cross the swamp and, right beyond this very bunch of trees, had sunk out of sight before she could be rescued.

"But I'll bet dad could get me ashore if he only knew where I was," said Luke, and standing up with his arm clasping the dead tree he called again.

"Pointer" and "Jones" had wandered aimlessly about that afternoon. Luke had apparently not cared for their company when he started off, but the afternoon seemed long and the two dogs decided that they would look up their young master. It did not take them long to get on his trail through the woods to the swamp and just as Luke's second call came echoing back to him the boy was cheered

by the answering barks of "Jones" and "Pointer," and could see them standing on the shore. Evidently they were afraid to venture out to him, and Luke was afraid to call them. But after a few minutes' running up and down the shore "Pointer" seemed to realize that Luke was in trouble, and came leaping toward him. From stump to stump the dog bounded lightly and surely, and landed on the big roots beside Luke.

"Jones" remained on the shore for a few minutes, and then disappeared in the woods. Luke tried to send "Pointer" back to shore, but the dog would not go. The boy tore a piece from the sleeve of his ragged shirt, and tied it to the leather strap around "Pointer's" neck.

"Go home, sir," he said, hoping that in some way his father would understand that he was in trouble, and that "Pointer" would bring Mr. Sanders back to the swamp. But "Pointer" would not budge, and Luke began to watch the sky again, and wonder how long before night would come.

Mr. Sanders had come home for his supper, but neither Luke nor the dogs were at home. So he sat down on the door-step to wait for them. While he sat there "Jones" came running toward the house,

and seeing Mr. Sanders on the steps the dog stopped short and settled comfortably down beside him.

"Looks as if you'd been down to that pesky swamp, 'Jones,'" said Mr. Sanders, noticing the swamp mud on the dog's legs.

"Where's old 'Pointer'?" he continued; "have you got old Pointer into some scrape and come off and left him? I b'lieve you have. You act sneaking," said Mr. Sanders, rising slowly. "Well, I'm all tired out, but I guess 'Pointer' is worth looking up. Find him!" he concluded, and "Jones" reluctantly started back toward the woods with Mr. Sanders leisurely following him. He had not gone very far before Luke's call for help came to his ears, and with a word to the dog he began to run toward the swamp.

"That pesky swamp," he said under his breath; "but Luke knows about it. I suppose old 'Pointer' has got into the quicksands and the boy can't get him out."

It did not take Mr. Sanders very long to reach the swamp and to realize Luke's danger.

"Don't you try to come out here, dad," called Luke. "You just step back to the pasture fence and bring the top rail and I'll tell you what to do."

Mr. Sanders promptly obeyed, and with great caution got the rail within Luke's reach. It did not take the boy long to fix one end of it firmly on the roots, and the other on a solid stump, and then make his way to shore, followed by "Pointer."

"Haven't I ever told you to keep clear of that swamp?" asked Mr. Sanders, as Luke sprang on to solid ground by his father's side.

"Yes, dad," said Luke, reaching up and clasping his father's arm.

"Well, you ought not to have gone way out there, even if 'Pointer' couldn't get ashore," said Mr. Sanders, more mildly.

"I didn't go out after 'Pointer,' dad; he came out after me. I went after punk. The stuff Margie wrote about. I got a lot of it."

"Luke," said Mr. Sanders, and his voice trembled a little, "do you know enough now to keep away from the swamp? Wa'n't you scared?"

"Yes, dad," replied the boy. "I guess I shall keep away after this."

As the father and son came in sight of home Luke leaned a little heavily against his father and Mr. Sanders put his arm about him.

"I'll see to supper right away," he said, as Luke sat down on the step. The dogs sat down close to Luke.

"Those are first-rate dogs, Luke," said Mr. Sanders.

"Yes, dad," said Luke.

CHAPTER XIV

A PIECE OF PUNK

WHEN the time came for Betty to start for Columbia with her grandma she felt very dull and almost homesick, even at the thought of going so far away. Her mother and father reminded her of how brave Marjorie had been, and Luke presented her with a wooden box which he had made himself, with "BETTY" carved on the lid, but even this proved of small comfort. At last her grandmother asked her if she would not like to have Luke ride in to Columbia with them.

"He could make the acquaintance of the Clay boys, and would be company for your father on the drive home," she said.

"Oh, yes," Betty agreed eagerly. So Luke was invited to go to Columbia for a day's visit, and on the morning decided upon he presented himself at the Savory plantation all ready to start. He had on the gray suit and cap, his father had purchased him some stout shoes, and Luke looked and felt, as he expressed it, "like folks."

It seemed a very wonderful thing to him that he should really be going to Columbia. When they drove by Mr. Sanders' shop Luke looked eagerly for a sight of his father. Mr. Sanders was standing in the door, and waved his hand as the carriage passed, and Luke and Betty waved in return.

The drive was very pleasant. Most of the way the road was shaded by big trees and from the occasional hilltops they had glimpses of the river; here and there were fields of cotton, and negroes gathering the fleecy crop. Grandma pointed out different plantations where she had visited as a girl, and Mr. Savory showed Luke where a body of Northern troops had once camped. After a drive of two hours they were nearly in sight of the city, and as they drove by the great cotton mills Luke looked at them in wonder. When they turned into the street leading by the State House Mr. Savory drove slowly that Luke might have a good look at the building. Grandma Savory leaned out and looked at it too.

"I could wish that the grounds were more neatly kept," she said. But to Luke everything was new and wonderful. Betty had often visited Columbia, and now felt very proud to be able to tell Luke the names of the streets, and of some of the public buildings.

Luke sat up very straight, and while he looked and admired he was thinking of the dollar and a half which was safe in his pocket and with which he had determined to buy a present for Mrs. Philips.

"Do you suppose Ashley is anything like this?" he said, turning to Betty.

"No, indeed," said Betty. "Why, Luke, this is a city, the capital of South Carolina, and Ashley is just a little Massachusetts village."

"Margie thinks Ashley is a right fine place," continued Luke.

"Well," explained Betty, "that is because her Aunt Maria lives there."

Luke thought that might be the reason, and turned his admiring eyes toward Grandma Savory's house which Betty pointed out.

It was of red brick, and was approached by a driveway of smooth gravel. When the carriage stopped the big front door opened, and an old negro man stood bowing and smiling.

"Well, Washington, here I am home again. And here is Miss Betty, and her father, and Master Luke Sanders come to visit us."

"'Deed, ahse right glad yo'se got home, missy," said the old man, bowing and smiling at each of the

guests. "Ah'll just take the hosses to the stable. Aunt Cassy'll be pleased to have company," he added, and as he spoke Aunt Cassy appeared. She wore a turban, after the manner of old Southern mammies, and a neat blue gingham gown with a big white apron. She smiled radiantly upon her mistress, and patted Betty on the shoulder.

"Bress de Lawd, we'se gwine to have young folks 'bout again," she said. "Ain't had no young folks since you lef' home, Massa Philip," she added, nodding to Mr. Savory.

"That's where the Clay boys live," said Betty, pointing across the smooth green lawn to a house very much like Grandma Savory's. "I wonder if grandma won't let us go over. I'll go and see."

But grandma said that they had better wait until after luncheon; then she would go over with them. As it would be an hour before lunch time Mr. Savory said he would take Luke and Betty for a walk.

"Shall we go near stores?" asked Luke, as they started out.

"Why, yes," said Mr. Savory; "have you an errand to do?"

"I wanted to buy Mrs. Philips a present," explained Luke. "It's money that boy in Ashley paid me for

whittling out two dogs, and the dollar the man threw me for Spot and Stripe. It's a dollar and a half. I ought to get something nice for that, hadn't I?" he asked.

Mr. Savory looked thoughtful. "What did you want to buy?" he asked.

Luke looked a little embarrassed. "I thought I would buy her a white dress," he said. "I heard her say she wished she had a white dress."

Mr. Savory nodded understandingly, and in a few minutes they entered a large store, where Mr. Savory asked to see white dress materials. After some consultation with the clerk as to the number of yards needed, Luke selected a white dimity, and when he had paid for ten yards, which the clerk assured him was an ample pattern, he had twenty-five cents left. He took the neat parcel and carried it very carefully.

When they returned from their walk Grandma Savory was sitting on the piazza, and near her stood two boys so exactly alike that Luke knew they must be the twins; and playing in front of the house were two brown setter dogs.

"Spot, Spot," called Luke, and instantly one of the dogs ran toward him, while the other followed with yelps of recognition.

Grandma had evidently explained the whole affair to the twins, and the three boys soon became friendly. Luke told the Clay boys about his adventure in the swamp after the punk the day before. He had a piece in his pocket, which the boys examined with much interest. Mr. Savory looked at it also.

"Rather bad stuff to leave near a cotton gin," he said, with a little laugh. "Where did you leave yours, Luke?"

"Oh, mine is all right, sir," responded the boy. "It is smoldering, but I left it all covered up and in a safe place in the shed."

Mr. Savory knew that Luke was not a careless boy, and gave the matter no further thought. The Clay boys did not seem to notice that Luke wore an old suit of George's. In fact Grandma Savory had spoken to them as if she thought it rather generous of Luke to let them keep the puppies, and the twins thought their new friend was a fine sort of boy.

When the time came for Mr. Savory and Luke to start for home Betty bade them good-bye quite cheerfully. "I shall have as much to write about as Margie has," she called after them.

Luke was very quiet on the drive home. He was thinking about the white dress he had purchased

for Mrs. Philips, and wondering if she would like it.

As they came near the Philips plantation Mr. Savory noticed smoke rising above the tree-tops. "What's that, Luke?" he exclaimed in a startled tone, pointing with his whip toward the smoke and urging his horses into a faster pace.

Luke leaned forward and looked anxiously toward the slow-rising smoke.

The horses were now set into a run, and in a few moments they were in sight of the blacksmith-shop, and Luke called out in dismay, "Oh, our house is burning up, it's burning up!"

He would have sprung from the carriage, but a word from Mr. Savory prevented him. Mr. Savory drove beyond the blacksmith shop, where the horses would not be frightened by the flames, and he and Luke hurried back to the burning cabin.

Mr. Sanders was rushing in and out of the little house, bringing out now a table and again a chair or ungainly bundle, and Luke ran forward to help him.

"Keep away, boy," called Mr. Sanders. "Everything's out and you'll only get burned. The cabin's got to go!" Mr. Savory had realized at a glance that the fire had gained too great a headway to save the

house, and he put a restraining hand on the shoulder of the trembling boy.

In a moment Mr. Sanders, blackened with smoke and with arms and hands that showed how good a fight he had made for his home, came over and sank down on the grass near his son, and Luke slipped to his knees beside him.

"That punk of yourn, Luke," drawled Mr. Sanders, pulling down a torn shirt sleeve, "is 'bout the best stuff for starting a real good lively fire that you'll find in a month of Sundays."

"Oh, father, was it the punk? Margie said it would smolder for days."

"P'raps 'twould, son, if 'twas let alone; but I took out a little of the stuff to start up the kitchen fire, and then I stepped over to the shop, and I vummy, if, before I could get back, the whole shed wasn't in a blaze."

"Oh, father, you didn't cover the punk up," said Luke.

"Maybe I didn't, son," responded Mr. Sanders.

Tears were streaming down Luke's face, and his father tried to comfort him.

"Your clo'es and books and the little wooden images you whittled are all wrapped up in the checked quilt, Luke," he said.

"Kind of hard luck, ain't it?" he continued, turning to Mr. Savory. "It do'os seem as if I couldn't get no kind of a start. Luke and me'll have to camp out for a spell."

Just then Aunt Cora, followed by Mr. and Mrs. Philips came hurrying down the road, and in a moment a group from the Savory plantation joined them. There were many offers of neighborly hospitality, and Mr. Sanders agreed that he and Luke would go home with Mrs. Philips. Luke had fled to the back of the shop, and was lying flat on his face, regardless of the gray suit, crying bitterly. The only home he had ever known was a smoldering ruin, and he felt that he was to blame. He wished Margie had never written him about the punk, and above all he wished that he had not gone to Columbia that day.

While he lay there miserable and unhappy, he felt a hand touch his rough hair and smooth it gently, and he realized that Mrs. Philips was close beside him. He remembered the present he had bought for her, and how happy he had expected to be in her pleasure, and now he knew he could not be happy again. But his sobs ceased, and he waited for his friend to speak.

"Wasn't it fortunate that the fire did not come in the night, Luke?" she said. "Now neither you nor

your father are hurt, and most of your things are saved; and Mr. Philips has thought of a fine plan for a new home for you and your father. He is telling Mr. Sanders about it now."

"What is it?" asked Luke, moving his head so that he could see Mrs. Philips.

"Well, you know our old carriage-house that stands below the stable? Mr. Philips says that you and your father can easily make that into a comfortable house, and move your things right in."

Luke was sitting up by this time and listening eagerly. The carriage-house was a much larger and better building than the little cabin where Luke and his father had lived.

"We shall be very glad to have you and your father live there," continued Mrs. Philips; "for we are going to visit Margie and Aunt Maria this fall, and there will be a good deal of work for you and your father to do about the plantation. Now, Luke, we must go and talk to your father."

Luke got up feeling a little ashamed of his tears, which Mrs. Philips had not seemed to notice. He remembered the package in Mr. Savory's carriage, and ran to get it, while Mrs. Philips joined the little group near the blacksmith shop. Mr. Sanders was greatly

encouraged by his neighbors' kindness, and when Luke came back with his bundle he found his father talking briskly with Mr. Philips about the changes that would have to be made in the carriage-house.

The boy stood very close to Mrs. Philips, and when she turned to him with a smile, he smiled back and said, "I bought you a present, Mrs. Philips," and held the package toward her.

She took it, and said, "Now, what is it, Luke? You must tell me, or I shall have to open it right here."

Luke smiled again. "It's something you wanted," he said, very low, so that the others would not hear. "It's a white dress."

CHAPTER XV

JUST LIKE AUNT MARIA

From a wabbly puppy with long legs Buff had grown into a very well-behaved dog. He had become quite a favorite with Aunt Maria, and often accompanied her on her walks about the village. Sometimes he went on excursions to the woods or the river with Ferdinand, and these were the days when he came home wet and muddy; for Ferdinand would send him into the river after sticks, which Buff thought was great fun.

One day Margie, Ada, and Adrienne Wilson with her little sister Lucy, had gone for a walk to the river. Buff was with them, and he and little Lucy became friends at once and played together on the river-bank while Ada and Margie and Adrienne gathered ferns and goldenrod. Lucy was only four years old, and she thought the shining water with its reflections of the overhanging trees very pretty and attractive. She would reach out after the branches which seemed to be growing in the water, and laugh delightedly when they seemed to move away from her. The older girls meant to take great care of her, and cau-

tioned her not to go too near the water; but while Adrienne was arranging a wreath on Margie's head they forgot Lucy for a moment. It was just then that a dancing little branch beckoned Lucy most enticingly, and reaching after it she lost her balance and fell into the water!

There was a strong current near the shore and in an instant Lucy was carried beyond the reach of the terrified little girls who, hearing her scream of fright, ran down the bank and tried their best to get hold of Lucy's dress. Adrienne waded in after her little sister, greatly to Margie's alarm, who feared both her playmates would be swept away. "Buff, Buff," she screamed, and at her call Buff bounded over the bank into the stream and in a moment had grabbed the little girl by her skirts and was swimming rapidly toward the shore. Adrienne waded back to dry land and she and Margie, the moment Buff landed, grasped the screaming Lucy, and after assuring themselves that she was really safe, although very wet and frightened they hurried her toward home. Adrienne was nearly in tears when she realized what a narrow escape her little sister had, and Ada and Margie praised Buff and pitied Lucy all the way home.

"Mother will want to buy Buff, I know she will," said Adrienne, as they reached the Wilsons' house.

"Oh, I couldn't sell him," said Margie. "He was given to me, and I couldn't sell him even if he did save Lucy's life. Could I, Ada?"

"Wouldn't you if my mother paid you a lot of money?" questioned Adrienne, anxiously. "You see if Buff was our dog then we would feel so safe about Lucy," urged Adrienne; but even this did not impress Margie.

After this Buff became the favorite of the village. People would stop on the street to speak to him, and he was pointed out as the dog that had saved the little Wilson girl's life. Mr. Wilson gave him a beautiful collar with "Buff" engraved upon it, and everybody had a good word for the dog.

That is, everybody except little Lucy Wilson, who whenever she saw him coming would scream with fright. Some way the little girl connected her fall into the water, the being grabbed and pulled roughly out on shore, with Buff. And although Mrs. Wilson said that when Lucy was old enough to understand that she would not be afraid but would love Buff dearly, both Margie and Ferdinand felt that it was very ungrateful of Lucy to scream at the sight of

her preserver. Margie had asked Ferdinand's advice in regard to selling Buff to the Wilsons.

"I don't want to sell him because Betty gave him to me," she said, "and because my Aunt Maria really likes him; but Adrienne says that because he saved Lucy's life they ought to buy him."

Ferdinand looked very serious for a moment. "I s'pose if I had been there I should have sprung right in and saved Lucy myself, and then do you s'pose my mother would have sold me to the Wilsons? I guess not!"

"Of course she wouldn't," agreed Margie eagerly.

"Well," said Ferdinand, "it's just the same thing."

"So it is," said Margie. "I think you are awful smart, Ferdinand. I guess you could be an artist when you grow up if you wanted to. Having such a nice name will be a great help to you."

"It's a good enough name, I s'pose," said Ferdinand, somewhat doubtfully. He secretly scorned his name, and had resolved when he was a man to be called "Webb," as his father was now.

"What do you want everybody to be artists for?" he questioned. "I'd rather be a motor-man or an explorer."

Margie looked at him soberly. "I don't know as

I care much about your being an artist," she said; "and I've about given up Luke being an artist, but it's dreadful hard, when I taught him to read and expected he would be just like Mr. Arthur Field."

"Oh, I know Mr. Field; he walks with a crutch," said Ferdinand. Margie nodded.

"Luke isn't lame, of course," she said; "but you don't have to be lame to be an artist."

Mr. and Mrs. Philips were to arrive in Ashley late in October. They wrote of Mr. Field's arrival just after the Sanders' cabin was burned, and said that the artist would come north with them. Marjorie felt that she had a good deal to look forward to, for she was very anxious to see Mr. Field as well as her father and mother.

She watched Aunt Maria more closely than ever, and Ada frequently encouraged her by telling her that she walked just like her Aunt Maria. "And I think you smile like her, too," she would add hopefully.

"Oh, Ada, do you? Wouldn't it be lovely if when my mother comes she finds me looking 'most exactly like Aunt Maria," exclaimed Margie.

"Well, of course you couldn't look exactly like her," responded Ada.

"Why couldn't I? I am 'most as tall as she is; and I have brown eyes, and she has brown eyes; and my hair is dark brown and so is Aunt Maria's. I don't see why I can't look exactly like her if I try. I guess if I don't 'twill be my own fault, and a dreadful disappointment to my mother and father."

"They prob'ly didn't expect you to look like her so soon," said Ada. "They prob'ly meant when you was older, that it would come more gradually."

"Then they would be real surprised and pleased if when they come they find I have improved my time and looked like her so much sooner than they expected," urged Margie. "And then they would want me to go right home with them, because that is what they sent me up here for, to grow into a woman just like Aunt Maria."

"I wouldn't want you to go home," said Ada.

"Well," responded Margie thoughtfully, "if mother and father would bring Luke and Betty and Aunt Cora, and 'Uncle,' I'd like to stay. Because if I don't see Aunt Maria right along I may forget to be just like her."

The two little girls were sitting on Miss Wing's front steps. They had their dolls and their work-baskets and were very busy making new gowns for Rosamund

Antoinette, and for Ada's doll, Polly. Near to the little girls sat Sarah Mullins watching them sleepily, while Buff lay on the brick walk in the sunshine.

The maples were turning red, and the leaves on the elms were yellow, but the neat flower-beds were no longer filled with blossoming plants. The day was warm and bright, and when Margie realized that in just one month more her mother and father would be in Ashley she could hardly keep still long enough to try on Rosamund Antoinette's pink gown.

Ada had been silent for a moment and then she looked at Margie, and said, "I have thought of two ways, Margie, that you could be ever so much more like your aunt than you are now."

"Oh, Ada," said Margie eagerly.

"Yes; you know your aunt braids her hair in fine braids, and pins it round and round, nice and smooth and flat on the back of her head."

"Yes, yes, I could do that, couldn't I?"

"You haven't any hairpins!"

"Well, I can buy some; that is if they don't cost too much. I have sixty-three cents. Do you suppose hairpins cost more than that, Ada?"

"I guess they cost as much as a dollar, because they

come all done up in little bundles wrapped in red paper," said Ada.

"What's the other thing you thought of?" questioned Margie anxiously.

"Your clothes are so different from your aunt's. She most always wears a gray dress or a black dress, you know, and the waist buttons tight, right down the front; and the skirts are long and seem kind of stiff 'round the bottom, and set out. Then she always has something white round her neck and wrists, and wears that big pink cameo pin with a church on it."

Marjorie sighed. "I don't suppose Aunt Maria would get me a new gray dress made just like hers."

Ada giggled. "You'd look awful funny, Margie."

"No, I shouldn't, Ada. Perhaps some other girl might, but if I was doing it to please my mother and father, not just dressing up for fun, but because they were anxious for me to look just like her; why, then nobody would think I looked funny!"

Ada grew serious instantly. "You find out how much hairpins cost, Margie, and I'll help you do your hair. I know just how Miss Wing does hers because all my life I've sat in the pew right back of her at church, and her hair is so smooth!"

"Let's go right down to Mr. Simpson's store and

ask about hairpins now," said Margie. "We can put Rosamund and Polly on the front stairs."

Ada agreed, and the two little girls were soon hurrying toward the village store with Buff close beside them. Hairpins proved to be cheap. Three cents a bunch for the black wire ones with crinkles in them! Margie promptly decided to take two bunches. Then back they went to Margie's house, and up-stairs to the little white room, where Ada proceeded to comb and braid Margie's dark hair as smoothly as possible, and to pin it closely about the back of her head. It proved a difficult and somewhat painful undertaking, and Ada's arms were tired and Margie's head sore before any satisfactory results were achieved; but at last Ada declared that it was "just as much like Miss Wing's as can be!" and Margie was allowed to look in the glass.

"Oh, Ada, it all crinkles about my face, and you know Aunt Maria's is as smooth as smooth can be!" said Margie reproachfully.

"It's your hair will curl that way," explained Ada. "It isn't my fault. If you was to get some lard perhaps I could smooth it down more like hers. Are you going to let your aunt see your hair to-night?"

"Oh, no," said Margie, beginning to take out the

"Oh, Ada, it all crinkles about my face"

hairpins. "You see, Ada, I think it would be a nice surprise for Aunt Maria, as well as for my mother and father, if she could see how much I was like her the same time they do. While you were braiding my hair I thought out just how to do it. The day mother and father come Aunt Maria will go to Boston to meet them, and I'll stay home; then you come over and do my hair, and we'll make it smooth and nice with lard, and I will borrow one of Aunt Maria's dresses and put it on and be all ready before they get here. Then, when they come up the steps I'll open the door!" Margie made an impressive pause for a second, and then said in a lower tone, "And there I will stand before them exactly like my Aunt Maria!"

"I guess they will be awful pleased!" said Ada.

"Of course they will," agreed Margie. "Why, that's just what they had me come to Massachusetts for, and they thought it would take two years. I'm real glad you thought about the hair and the dress, Ada!"

"Is it to be a truly secret?" asked Ada.

"Oh, yes, till my mother comes; then, of course, everybody will know it, as I shall do my hair that way and wear long dresses all the time."

Ada giggled again. "I can't help thinking how funny you'll look," she said apologetically.

"I shan't look funny either, Ada; you know my mother expects me to do everything I can to be just like my Aunt Maria! Anyway, it's a secret!"

"Yes, indeed," said Ada.

CHAPTER XVI

MARGIE'S FAIR

"Oh, Ada," exclaimed Margie one morning when the two little girls met on their way to school, "you remember about those little girls we saw in Boston?"

Ada nodded. "The ones who went to ride in the swan boat when your Aunt Maria paid for them?"

"Yes," said Margie; "those very ones. And you remember that I told you that their dresses were not clean, and that they were barefooted, and did not wear any hats?"

Ada nodded again.

"Well, Aunt Maria says there are lots of little girls, and little boys, too, like those, in Boston; and that when winter comes their hands and feet are cold, and their houses are cold, and that sometimes those little children are hungry."

"The little girls who went to sail in the swan boat?"

"Aunt Maria said she shouldn't be s'prised if those very little girls didn't have any warm coats to wear when snow comes!"

"Well," said Ada, "then their fathers will have to

buy them some. My father is going to buy me a new coat. I guess it will be a red one."

"Oh, goody!" said Margie; "then you can send your brown one, the one you wore that rainy day, to some poor little girl in the city."

"Why, Margie Philips, I can't, either. My mother expects me to wear the brown coat all winter to school, and save my new one for Sundays."

"Oh," said Margie; "but if I was you I wouldn't have a new one then; I'd get my father to give me the money and I'd send it to the little girls who can't have even mittens."

Ada looked at Margie anxiously. "I guess you won't give away your old coat until your aunt buys you another one," she said.

"Oh, I haven't any old coat, or any new one, yet; but Ada, wouldn't it be lovely if we could send something to those little girls?"

"I could send my blue sweater, I guess; it's so small I can't hardly wriggle into it," said Ada thoughtfully. "What could you send?"

"Oh, dear!" said Margie. "I haven't any outgrown things, and my clothes are all summer clothes; but I know how we could earn some money to buy things with."

"How?" asked Ada eagerly; but they were at the schoolhouse door and there was no opportunity for Margie to explain her plan. Ada could not think of anything else until recess time, and as soon as they were out of doors she said: "Oh, Margie, what is the plan?"

"Well," said Margie, "I didn't think it up all my own self; Aunt Maria thought of it first. She knows where some children live in Boston in little narrow places, where there's not a yard to play in, or anything. And when winter comes ——"

"But what is the plan?" interrupted Ada.

"Why! I was just telling you," responded Margie reproachfully.

"No, you haven't said a word about any plan; you are just telling where children live without a yard."

"Why, Ada Streeter ——"

But their conversation was interrupted by Adrienne Wilson, who came running up to tell them that her father had bought a yellow puppy, which looked almost exactly like Buff.

"Were you talking secrets?" asked Adrienne.

"No," said Margie, "not exactly secrets, because I was going to tell you about it after school."

"It's about little girls in Boston," volunteered Ada,

and just then the bell rang, and they had to go back to the schoolroom, and now Adrienne was as curious as Ada to hear what Margie had to tell, and as soon as school closed they began asking her questions, and this time Margie told her plan.

"We can have a fair, and make things to sell, pincushions and dusters, and pen-wipers, and everybody will come and buy; and we can have an entertainment, too, and charge ten cents admission; and then we'll get money enough to get a lot of shoes and things for those little girls," said Margie.

"But where can we have the fair and the entertainment?" questioned Ada.

"We could borrow the schoolhouse," suggested Adrienne, "if we had it Saturday."

"So we could!" agreed Margie; "and we'd have to have it Saturday."

"What kind of an entertainment would we have?" asked Ada; "would we speak pieces?"

Margie shook her head. "Tableaux," she said.

The other little girls looked at each other and then at Margie.

"Tableaux," said Margie, "are pictures, with real people in them. Aunt Maria told me; and then people guess what you are trying to be. Or, sometimes,

somebody says 'This is Queen Elizabeth,' and a curtain goes up, and there is Adrienne with a big ruff of paper around her neck and on her head a big crown made of pasteboard covered with gilt paper so as to look exactly like solid gold."

"Oh!" said Adrienne, breathlessly.

"And what would I be?" asked Ada.

"Perhaps you would be Queen of the May, with a wreath on your head, and flowers in your hands."

"And what would you be, Margie?"

"I don't know," said Margie; "but if we have it we must begin right away to make things, and to get all the girls at school to make things, and to ask their mothers for dresses and shoes to send to those other little girls who go cold winters."

"We might get the teacher to help," suggested Ada.

"Couldn't Lucy be in a tableau?" asked Adrienne.

"I guess she could," said Margie. "Now let's tell some of the girls, and Aunt Maria said that we could have a meeting at her house to talk it over."

Miss Pitts, the teacher, was greatly interested by Margie's plan; and the next day after school ten little girls about Margie's age met at Miss Wing's. Miss Pitts was with them, and it was decided that the fair

should be held three weeks later, on Saturday afternoon and evening, in the schoolhouse.

Miss Pitts thought that they could arrange a number of tableaux. She read Jean Ingelow's "Seven Times One are Seven" to the girls, and they all thought it would be a fine idea to give the poem as a series of tableaux, each little girl repeating the verse which would explain her own tableau.

Each one was to make some special thing for the fair. Margie was to make dusters, Ada was to make holders, Adrienne was to make bags of calico for scrap-bags, and each of the other girls was given special things to make.

As soon as the mothers heard of the little girls' undertaking they became interested, and numerous parcels of clothing were sent to Miss Wing's house as gifts for the little girls in the city who did not have warm clothing for winter. When Farmer Wyman heard of the plan, he said that he would give a barrel of apples, potatoes, squash and onions; other farmers became interested, and before the day of the fair arrived there was a freight car standing near the station pretty well filled with farm produce which was to go to Boston to the city missionary, who would see that it was delivered to families where there were little

boys and girls who did not always have enough to eat.

What a busy time it was! Every day after school the little girls met and worked industriously for the fair. Margie had written Luke and Betty about it, and Luke sent her a tiny dog cut out of wood, and also a tiny branch with two birds perched upon it, which he had skilfully carved. Every one admired these very much, and Margie felt very proud of Luke. Betty wrote to say that she was learning to knit, and that she could not make anything in time for the fair, but she would knit two pairs of mittens for little girls just her size, and send them later.

When the day of the fair came the schoolroom was trimmed with branches of fragrant fir and pine, with long strands of evergreen, and bunches of bright berries. Ferdinand and several of his boy friends had gone to the woods after the greenery and had arranged it around the windows and over the doors.

A number of the desks were covered with pretty things made for the fair, and the ten little girls, with white aprons and tiny white caps, were in attendance. The fair began at two o'clock on Saturday afternoon, and by half-past three everything was sold, much to Margie's delight. Miss Pitts counted up the money

and found they had taken over twenty dollars. The entertainment was to be at seven o'clock that evening. The tiny platform in the schoolroom was easily arranged for a stage. The boys were delighted to find they could be of use in putting up the curtains. The back of the platform, filled in with the green branches of spruce and hemlock, made a fine background for the little girls in their light dresses, and the tableaux were a great success.

Monday the car with its boxes of clothing, its barrels of apples and potatoes, started for Boston; and the same day a letter went to the city missionary, containing a check for thirty dollars to be used to buy clothing for children who needed it. Miss Pitts wrote the letter and told all about the fair, and about the little girls who planned it. Margie and Ada waited anxiously for Miss Pitts to receive an answer to this letter, and it soon came, telling of the warm shoes and stockings the money had purchased, of the neat coats and dresses, and of how much comfort and happiness the carload of apples and potatoes had given to many families.

"Do you s'pose those little girls who rode in the swan boat got any apples or any shoes?" asked Ada, as she and Margie talked it all over.

"P'raps so. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if they had shoes and stockings, and p'raps a hat," said Margie hopefully.

"Well," said Ada, "I hope one of those little girls got my blue sweater and that the other one got my brown coat."

"Oh, did you send the brown coat, Ada?"

"Yes, and I have the loveliest new red coat."

"I guess it was lucky Aunt Maria and I saw those little girls last summer," said Margie.

"Well, the fair was considerable work," replied Ada, thoughtfully. "But I guess it was worth while, don't you?"

CHAPTER XVII

LUKE MAKES A NEW FRIEND

When Mr. Field arrived at the Philips plantation Luke and his father were busy making the necessary alterations in the carriage-house, and the artist often went down and watched them about their work. He was a tall man, with light hair, and as Luke watched him he thought that Mr. Field did not look at all as he had expected. "His hair isn't any darker than mine," he said to his father; "and he isn't so dreadful lame either; he gets about with that crutch as smart as anybody."

The more Luke saw of Mr. Field the better he understood why Margie thought it such a fine thing to be an artist, so gentle and lovable he was and so full of information about things Luke had always wanted to know.

"He's the seeingest man, dad," exclaimed Luke. "He makes you think that all the old things around you are fine; he's showed me pictures all around here, in the woods, and down on the creek, and everywhere. It's just how you look at things, he says, that makes

you see pictures in them. And what he don't know about dogs——" and Luke paused in silent admiration.

The boy looked over the artist's sketches with glowing eyes, and after a time timidly brought out his wooden dogs, in which Mr. Field showed much interest. He looked closely also at a drawing of the setter pups that Luke was making to send to Margie.

"I'm sure she'll like it," he said. "She taught you to read, didn't she?" he added.

"Yes, sir, just as her Aunt Maria did you," replied Luke. Mr. Field laughed a little, and then began to talk to Luke about Ashley, and about his own boyhood. Luke listened, and when he went home that day he was full of new plans and ambitions.

Mr. Field found that whatever Luke attempted, work, lessons, or play, he became greatly interested in and was patient and persevering. The artist liked to have the boy with him, and a warm friendship grew up between them.

Mr. Sanders and Mrs. Philips had many talks together, and Mr. Sanders often watched Luke with a new interest. One day the boy noticed that his father seemed unusually dull and solemn.

"What's the matter, dad?" he asked anxiously. "You feeling sick?"

Mr. Sanders shook his head, and endeavored to look more cheerful. "Sick!" he exclaimed. "I guess not, living as well as we do, with Aunt Cora fetchin' us in hot bread every mornin', and me earnin' reg'lar wages, you might say, work bein' so steady. I s'pose I looked sort of lonesome, eh?"

"Why, yes," responded Luke slowly

"Well, I expect I was sort of projectin' into the future when you'd be goin' off and I'd hev' to keep house alone."

Luke laughed. "Why, I guess that time won't ever come, dad," he said. "I'd be looking lonesome myself if I thought I'd have to leave you."

Mr. Sanders was silent for a moment. "Well, I don't know, son," he said; "if you're goin' to have an education the way Mr. Field says, it looks to me as if you'd have to strike out from here some day."

Luke's face grew sober. "But that won't be 'til I grow up, dad," he said; "not for a long time."

"They tell me different," said Mr. Sanders. "They say to get a good education you have to begin young."

"Then I don't want any education," said Luke, almost fiercely. "I won't go and leave you, dad."

Mr. Sanders patted his son's arm. "Land, 'twould come dreadful hard to let you go," he said with a sigh.

Mrs. Philips made up the white dress Luke had given her, and he felt very proud and happy when he saw her wear it.

"I wish Mr. Field would paint your picture in a white dress," he said, looking at her admiringly; "and paint it just as you look when you smile. Did Mr. Field ever paint Miss Wing's picture?"

"Yes, Luke, he painted a beautiful portrait of Miss Wing, and it hangs in his studio in Boston. Perhaps you'll see it there some day."

"I wish I could," said Luke.

Mr. and Mrs. Philips had decided that the thousand dollars which Miss Wing wished to give her sister should be put in the bank for Marjorie.

"Perhaps she may want to go to college, and a thousand dollars would be a great help," her father had said.

"Or she may want to study music, or perhaps be a doctor," Mrs. Philips had responded with a little laugh. "In any event it will be useful to her later on." So she had written to Miss Wing that they

should consider the money Marjorie's, and Miss Wing had told her little niece.

"I don't suppose I could buy a nice pony with it?" Margie had suggested.

"No indeed," said Miss Wing; "that thousand dollars is for your education."

"To make me just like you," Margie had responded laughingly. "Oh, Aunt Maria, it won't take all that money for that, why ——" then she stopped, remembering that in a very short time her aunt would see how well she had improved the time, and then perhaps the thousand dollars could be used to buy a pony.

Marjorie's words gave her aunt a new thought, and she smiled as she busied herself about her household work. That afternoon she went out to see Mr. Wyman and had a long talk with him, and when she came home she stopped at a carpenter's shop and engaged him to come and make some repairs on the little stable which stood back of the house.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SURPRISE

When Aunt Maria received word that Mr. and Mrs. Philips would reach Boston on a certain day Margie could hardly wait for that day to come.

"I s'pose that I am the luckiest girl that ever was," she said, as she helped her Aunt Maria about the household work.

Aunt Maria smiled at the happy face of her little niece, and nodded responsively.

"I shouldn't wonder," she said, "with your 'surprise' for your mother, and her surprise for you."

Margie felt that these were very exciting days, and she almost wished that she might stay away from school until after her father and mother came.

Early in the morning of the day on which Mr. and Mrs. Philips were to arrive Margie hurried off to tell Ada, who promised to be on hand in good season to do her hair just like Miss Wing's, and to help her with the preparations for the "surprise."

Miss Wing started off in good season to meet the travelers, and told Margie that if their train reached

Boston on time they would arrive in Ashley a little after five. Margie thought nothing could be better, as that would give her plenty of time after school to have her hair arranged like her aunt's and to change her dress for one of Miss Wing's.

It was hard to be attentive to lessons that day, but Margie did her best until the close of the afternoon session; then she and Ada hurried home as fast as possible.

Margie had secured a cup of lard from the pantry, and Ada applied it generously to the crinkly brown hair. They were both delighted with the result. Every kink and ripple was smoothed out, and the braids were as smooth as those of Miss Wing herself. Then Margie went to her aunt's room and brought out a neat gray dress.

"Isn't it lucky she didn't wear the cameo pin!" exclaimed Margie as she saw it on her aunt's pincushion.

Margie found the dress rather longer than she expected. "I believe Aunt Maria is a lot taller than I am after all," she said regretfully.

"Well, she is some taller," admitted Ada.

"And the waist don't button tight on me, same as it does on Aunt Maria," said Margie.

"I might tuck in things to make the waist fit," suggested Ada.

"Oh, do, Ada," said Margie anxiously; "because I don't seem to look as much like her as I expected;" so Ada tucked in several handkerchiefs and a towel to give Margie's waist the desired size.

"There isn't anything else you can think of, is there?" Margie asked.

"No," said Ada. "My! You look real grown-up, Margie. I guess your mother'll hardly know you."

This was encouraging, and Margie's hopes revived. Both the little girls began to watch the road to the depot. Ada had advised that not until Miss Wing and Mr. and Mrs. Philips had reached the gate should Margie open the front door and welcome them.

"I'll run home just as soon as I see them coming," Ada added. "My mother told me not to stay."

It was just after five when the little girls saw the expected visitors coming up the street. Ada scampered for home, while Margie went carefully down the stairs, and stood just inside the door ready to open it when she should hear the sound of steps on the brick walk.

"Where is my 'Sweet Marjorie'?" her father had asked in a disappointed tone, when they came in sight

of the house and no little girl appeared to welcome them.

"Oh, she has planned some kind of a surprise for us," explained Miss Wing.

Mrs. Philips laughed. "Yes, she has been writing me about it for weeks."

Margie could hardly wait for the sound of the expected steps, and, as soon as she heard Buff's bark of welcome she swung open the door and, forgetting that she intended to smile just like Aunt Maria, rushed toward her mother with extended arms.

Unluckily she also forgot about her long skirts, and in a moment her feet had become entangled in them and over she fell, rolling down the steps to land in a rumpled gray heap at her father's feet. Buff felt that this was another opportunity for him to distinguish himself, and began tugging at the gray dress with so much vigor that the well-worn material could not stand the strain; and a long, yawning rent down the back of the skirt was the result.

"Oh, mother! mother!" called Margie, who had fallen on her face and was prevented from rising by her skirts and by Buff's unexpected tugs and pulls.

"For pity's sake! It is Margie!" exclaimed Mrs. Philips.

"And in my best gray dress," added Miss Wing, as Buff's efforts resulted in a final heart-breaking tear of the skirt.

Mr. Philips picked up the forlorn little figure, and bent his face over the greasy head.

"Why, child!" he exclaimed, "what is the matter with your hair? And how fat you are! Why, mother, just take hold of her."

"Fat!" exclaimed Aunt Maria with a laugh, as she looked at the stubby little figure.

Mrs. Philips was gazing at her little daughter in wonder. Margie had scraped her nose on the brick walk, and altogether presented a very different figure from the neat little girl they had expected to see.

"I wanted to look just like Aunt Maria," she sobbed. "You said you wanted me to be just such a woman, and I thought you'd be real surprised and pleased to see how much I was like her. Ada helped me!"

At this Miss Wing sat down on the piazza steps and laughed and laughed, and even Mr. Philips joined, but Margie's mother did not laugh. She put her arm about the forlorn little figure and drew her into the house, and held up the torn skirt as they made their way up the stairs to the little white chamber.

"Mother knows," she whispered. "And you were a dear little daughter to want to please her. But you didn't understand what I meant, did you, dear?"

"I guess not," said Margie with a sigh.

It did not take very long to restore Margie to her every-day self, and send her down-stairs to see her father. But she was a very quiet little girl that evening, and seemed to watch Aunt Maria with a new interest. When she said good-night to her mother she whispered, "I think I know now, mother, what you meant."

"Yes, dear?"

"You meant that you want me to be like Aunt Maria in my ways, and think about doing things for people as she does, like helping Mr. Field, and having Buff and me to live with her."

"Yes, dear, I hope you will be like her in spirit, and in generous deeds."

"I did teach Luke, mamma." Mrs. Philips nodded.

"Aunt Maria never said a word about the lard, or about her best dress being spoiled," continued Margie. "Perhaps I can grow like her. Ada said it ought to come gradually."

"That is the best way," said her mother kissing her good-night.

CHAPTER XIX

MR. FIELD'S NEW PICTURE

It was very early when Margie awoke the next morning, and she slid out of bed and dressed as quietly as she could. When she got down-stairs it was not quite six o'clock. She brought in kindlings and started the kitchen fire and filled the teakettle. Then she stepped softly into the dining-room and set the table. She took in the jar of cream which the milkman had left on the step, and when Miss Wing came down she found that a very good start had been made toward breakfast.

"You are a real treasure," she said, giving Margie a kiss. "And all this hot water."

"Oh, Aunt Maria," said Margie, "I have spoiled your pretty gray dress!"

Miss Wing laughed, and patted the little girl's shoulder.

"Do you know, Margie, that no one ever paid me such a compliment as you did. To think that you really wanted to look like me!"

This made Margie smile again. "Oh, but I shall be like you; only it will come gradually," she said.

"Has your mother told you about her surprise? It must be something remarkable, for we must all go to Mr. Field's studio with her to-day to see it."

"Do I go?" asked Margie.

"Indeed you do; it's your surprise first, and then I am to be surprised a little myself."

"What do you suppose it is, Aunt Maria?" said Margie eagerly.

"Well," responded Aunt Maria, "I have been wondering myself, and I have about made up my mind what it is."

"Oh, Aunt Maria!"

Aunt Maria nodded. "I believe it is a picture of your home," she said, "or perhaps a portrait of Betty. Now, run up-stairs with a pitcher of hot water for mamma, and tell her that breakfast will be ready in half an hour and that we must take the eight-thirty train."

* * * * * *

Mr. Field was very busy in his studio that morning. Fortunately he had somebody to help him, for there were many things to do. At one end of the room he

had raised a large gilt frame, carefully fastening and bracing it so that it would stand upright, and he spent a great deal of time in arranging curtains before it and behind. It seemed like a good deal of trouble for just a gilt frame, but Mr. Field worked hard over it and looked very much pleased when he had his work completed to his satisfaction.

"There," he said at last. "That will do. And now we will see what we can do in the way of surprises."

He took his place at the window to watch for his guests, and when he saw them coming went down to the door, greeted them warmly, and led them directly into the studio. He noticed Margie's eager look around the room, and began at once to talk to her about her southern home, and told her about Betty, whom he had seen in Columbia. Aunt Maria nodded to Margie, and found an opportunity to whisper, "It's a picture, my dear, right behind that big curtain, I'm sure of it."

But Mr. Field was telling Margie about "Uncle" and Aunt Cora, so she did not care so much about seeing a picture.

"And you saw Luke, too," Margie said, when Mr. Field did not mention her boy friend.

"Luke; oh, yes; the boy who is going to be a carpenter," responded Mr. Field.

Margie nodded. "Yes," she said. "I wanted him to be an artist like you, but there isn't any way for him to take drawing lessons, and Aunt Maria says artists have to draw."

"Yes," responded Mr. Field seriously.

"I s'pose it costs a lot of money to learn to be an artist," continued the little girl.

"Now, we want to see your picture," exclaimed Aunt Maria; "for I am sure that is what you have to show us."

Mr. Field smiled as he answered, "I think you will all say it is a speaking likeness."

He stepped toward the curtain that covered the big gilt frame and drew it carefully aside. For a moment they were all silent, for there before them in the frame was a picture of a boy, standing very stiff and straight, with one hand resting on a table, and shining eyes that looked right at Margie.

"Why," she exclaimed in wonder, "that is Luke Sanders! It's his living image," she added, after a moment.

Margie's exclamation seemed to have a strange effect on the figure. The mouth began to quiver;

"Why," she exclaimed, "that is Luke Sanders!

gradually a smile became visible, widening rapidly into a grin. Then a chuckle came out of the gilt frame, and the boy inside it winked, yes, actually winked at Margie.

"Hello," he said. "How do you like my picture?"

"Why, Luke," cried Margie, "is it really you?"

"Yes, it's my living image," replied the boy gaily. "You said so yourself," and in a moment they were all about him and he was busy explaining the mystery.

Margie's happy face and Miss Wing's look of approval made Mr. Field's own face brighten with pleasure.

"So you wanted Luke to be an artist?" he said to Margie. "Well, do you know I want him to be an artist, and I think he has decided that he will be one. I think some day Luke will be a sculptor," he went on, smiling at the boy, who watched him with eager eyes. "He will have to work very, very hard, but he has it in him. I am sure of it. So I have persuaded Mr. Sanders to let him stay here with me for a time. He is to help me, and go to school, and learn all he can. I will teach him drawing and modeling myself, and some day—well, we will see, won't we, Luke?"

The boy nodded his head confidently, and slipped his hand into that of his new friend.

"Oh, Mr. Field," said Marjorie, "do you s'pose it would cost more'n a thousand dollars to teach Luke to be an artist so he could paint a picture like that?" and she pointed toward Miss Wing's portrait, and, before he could answer, she continued almost in a whisper, "because my mother has put a thousand dollars in a bank for me, and like as not I shall never want it, and if Luke could be an artist for that I'd give it to him."

Mr. Field looked warmly at the little girl for a moment. Then he said, "I don't know about the picture. Perhaps Luke will be a different kind of artist, and make statues and other beautiful things in marble and bronze. And he may not need the thousand dollars. But he will never forget, I am sure, that you offered it to him, and that you have been his very best friend always. My dear child," he added, "I believe you are just like your Aunt Maria, in spirit, I mean—and in wanting to help other people."

Marjorie's face flushed happily. She wished that her mother had been near enough to hear what Mr. Field had said.

"I am going to be like her," she responded, "gradually."

Mrs. Philips and Luke were standing together looking at the portrait of Miss Wing.

"I shall paint a picture of you, some day, Mrs. Philips," said Luke shyly.

"So you shall, my boy," she responded; "and I will wear a white dress."

"Yes," said Luke; "and I will give it to Margie, because if it hadn't been for her I couldn't have even tried to be an artist."

It was arranged that Luke should go out to Ashley for a few days, greatly to Margie's delight, although she seemed rather sober when, accompanied by Mr. Field, the happy party started for home.

She was walking between Luke and Mr. Field, and they both noticed how quiet she was, and Luke watched her earnestly.

"Say, Margie, I'll bet I know what you are thinking about," he said at last.

Margie shook her head. "I don't believe you do, Luke," she answered.

"Betty!" exclaimed the boy suddenly, leaning toward her.

"Why, how did you know?" said Margie. "I was thinking about Betty and wishing that she was right here and knew all about your going to be an artist."

"She does know," said Luke. "Your mother told her, and she knows all about it. You see it was Betty's Grandma Savory who made the plan about my getting these nice clothes from the Clay boys on account of 'Spot' and 'Stripe';" and then Luke told her all about the dogs.

"Oh, I am so glad," said Margie, happily. "It makes me feel just as if Betty helped you to go to school and everything, doesn't it, Luke?"

Luke nodded understandingly. "I want to see 'Buff,'" he said.

Mr. Field had waited for Miss Wing, so Luke and Margie were walking by themselves.

"Let's both write to Betty to-morrow and tell her all about your being in a frame and everything!" said Margie.

"All right," agreed Luke, "but you had better write, Margie, because you write so much better than I do."

When they walked up to Miss Wing's house Mrs. Philips said,

"You have company, Maria; there is a pony team standing in front of the house."

Aunt Maria did not reply, but Margie exclaimed, "Isn't it a pretty pony! See how shiny it is, and its

lovely long tail. And Ferdinand Webb is holding its bridle, auntie."

As they came nearer they saw Ada standing just inside the gate. "Oh, there is Ada," said Margie.

Ada and Ferdinand were all smiles as Miss Wing came toward them, but they looked at Luke curiously, wondering who this strange boy was.

They all stopped and admired the neat little cart, and the well-groomed pony.

"Whose pony is it, Ada?" asked Margie, wondering if her little friend could possibly have had such a beautiful present as this pony.

Ada laughed. "I guess Miss Wing knows," she said.

Then Miss Wing laughed too. "Well, perhaps I do," she said. "I believe it belongs to Miss Marjorie Philips! Get in the cart, my dear, and let's see how we like it!"

"Oh, Aunt Maria!" exclaimed Marjorie. It did not seem possible that this wonderful pony and shining cart could be for her, so she stood looking first at the pony and then at her aunt until Miss Wing put her arm about the little girl and drew her toward the cart.

"Jump in, my dear," she said. Then Aunt Maria

stepped in beside her and they drove down the street a little way. When they came back the whole party escorted them to the little stable and watched Ferdinand and Luke unharness the little pony, and lead him into his stall. "Buff" had joined the party and kept close to Luke, while Sarah Mullins sat on the back porch and apparently did not notice that anything unusual was taking place.

Ada was persuaded to stay to supper, and it was a gay party that gathered round Miss Wing's supper-table that night.

"If Betty was only here," Margie whispered to Luke.

"Yes, and dad," responded the boy.

It was a long time before Marjorie could get to sleep that night. She thought of the pony in the stable, she thought of Luke, who was really taking drawing lessons at last; and, most of all, she thought of what Mr. Field had said to her. "I believe you are just like your Aunt Maria in spirit," he had said, and Marjorie sighed happily as she remembered it.

CHAPTER XX

MARGIE AND LUKE

THE next morning Luke and Margie both hurried out to the little stable to be sure that "Topsy," as they had named the pony, was really there. Luke led "Topsy" out in the yard and Aunt Maria came out with a lump of sugar, which the pony ate eagerly.

"Who do you think is coming to make us a visit to-day?" said Aunt Maria. Margie could not guess.

"Mrs. Melchin," said Aunt Maria. "I have just had a message from her, and it is to be a surprise for your dear mother. Mrs. Melchin will come on the eleven o'clock train, and I shall have to borrow your pony and cart, Margie, to go to the station to meet her."

"Oh," said Margie, "there are so many surprises!"

"Will she bring a parrot with her?" questioned Luke.

"No, indeed," said Aunt Maria.

Luke was eager to see Mrs. Melchin, and when the pony cart came back from the station he was at the gate ready to lead it back to the stable.

"She looks like a fairy godmother," the boy thought as the dainty old lady with her silver hair and soft silk gown stepped out of the cart.

"So this is the boy who can carve dogs and birds," she said, smiling at Luke. "I have heard about you, and you are just the boy I have been looking for. You must come in and see some of my birds. Why, a regular family party!" she exclaimed, as the door opened and Margie and her mother came running out. "You people would forget all about me," she continued, looking at Mrs. Philips, "if I would let you."

Mrs. Melchin asked Luke all about his Southern home, and the boy told her of his father and of the burning of the cabin. She listened to his story of going to the swamp to watch the redbirds.

"When you come to see me," she said, "I want you to watch my parrots, and if you can carve 'Beauty' out of wood for me I'll put it in the cabinet with my bronze and ivory birds."

Mrs. Melchin's visit was a pleasant surprise to them all. She was a good friend of Mr. Field's, and he was greatly pleased by her interest in Luke, and promised to bring the boy to see her very soon.

The next day they were all invited to spend the day with Farmer Wyman, and he included Ferdinand and

Ada in the invitation. Marjorie and Mr. Field were to go in the pony team, while the others were to ride out in Mr. Webb's three-seated wagon.

It was a cool autumn morning, and as they drove over the pleasant country road there were signs everywhere that winter was near at hand. Many of the trees were leafless, and along on the walls and fence rails could be seen traces of frost.

The pony trotted briskly along. Sometimes the road would be nearly carpeted with leaves, and his little hoofs made a soft "pad," "pad," "pad" as he went swiftly over them. Mr. Field showed Margie how to hold the reins, told her she must always turn to the right on meeting a team, cautioned her about the pony's tender mouth, and told her many things useful for any one to know who is to drive a pony.

"This is good weather to go nutting," said Mr. Field, as they came in sight of the Wyman farm. "Last night's frost must have opened the burrs, and I should not be surprised if Farmer Wyman sent you little people after chestnuts."

Margie listened eagerly. It was pleasure enough, she thought, to hold the reins over "Topsy," and watch him trot. She wished it had been a longer ride; but still, when Mr. Field spoke of going after

chestnuts she felt more ready to turn in the driveway that led up to the farm.

The other team was just ahead of them, and Farmer Wyman was standing at the door to welcome them. As they drew near Miss Wing and Mrs. Philips began to laugh, and in a moment they all were laughing, for there, ranged along on the sunny door-step directly back of Mr. Wyman, were seven black cats.

As Ferdinand and Luke scrambled out of the wagon the kittens scampered away; only one sedate old cat remained quietly near the door.

Farmer Wyman admired the pony, and told Margie that he knew all about it; and that she need never feel afraid that it would run away, or kick up its heels after it was harnessed, or do anything that a good pony should not do.

"You see 'Topsy' has been well brought up," he explained. "She has always been well treated and is used to kind people. She has never been made nervous and fretful by loud words; so her head is steady and she understands quickly."

Mr. and Mrs. Philips seemed greatly pleased at what Farmer Wyman had to say; but Margie had felt sure from the first look at "Topsy" that the pony was perfection.

There was a big open fire blazing away in the sitting-room, but none of them felt like staying indoors, so Farmer Wyman took them all out to the storehouse, which opened out of his carriage-house, and showed them great bins of yellow pumpkins, and bins of turnips and squash, bins of beets and onions, until they all exclaimed that they had never seen so many vegetables before.

Then the farmer selected two round smooth pumpkins and gave one to each of the boys. "I guess you both have pocket-knives," he said; "now let's see which one of you can make the best Jack-o'-lantern!"

While Ferdinand and Luke were busy hollowing out the pumpkins Aunt Maria and the little girls walked down to some beech-trees a little way from the house. They found a good many nuts ready to gather, and when they returned to the house Farmer Wyman said that after luncheon they would all go after chestnuts.

The grove of chestnut-trees grew on a high ridge some little distance back of Farmer Wyman's house. Luke and Ferdinand ran on ahead to find the best places to gather nuts. The boys thought it would be a good plan to shake the branches of some of the trees,

and so scrambled up and soon sent a shower of nuts down for the rest to pick up.

This chestnut grove was the pride of Farmer Wyman's heart, and was nearly as beautiful as Miss Wing's pine grove. When the boys came down from the trees and the baskets they had brought were filled with nuts, they were eager to get back to the house and roast chestnuts before the open fire.

"It's a pretty good place to roast apples, too," said Farmer Wyman. And as soon as they were gathered about the fire he brought in a basket of red apples, and showed the boys how to fix pointed sticks by which to hold the apples over the blaze.

They set the nuts in rows in front of the coals and every now and then one would fly open with a loud "snap," which made Ada and Margie jump back with surprise. Three of the black kittens had come into the sitting-room, and whenever a chestnut would fly off the hearth the kittens would run after it, and touch it cautiously with their paws.

"Now, I tell you what," said Farmer Wyman, looking about the happy circle, "I want you to promise me that you will all spend Christmas day with me. I'll have a Christmas tree for you."

Every one accepted this invitation, and when

Farmer Wyman told Luke that he wanted him to make him a visit when summer came, Luke thought that nothing could be more pleasant.

It was nearly dusk before any one thought of home. Luke and Ferdinand had finished their Jack-o'-lanterns and put them carefully under the wagon-seat.

"I think I must make a little sketch of the pony-team for you to send to Betty," said Mr. Field as he and Margie drove home.

"Oh, that will be lovely," said Margie. "And, Mr. Field, would you make the picture with Luke and me sitting in the cart?"

"Why, of course I will," said Mr. Field.

"I guess that will be Betty's 'surprise,'" said Margie, with a happy laugh; "and I guess she will want to come to Ashley too, when she knows what nice things happen here."

"I should think she would!" agreed Mr. Field.

"They seem to keep happening right along, ever since I came to live with Aunt Maria," said Margie; "but I guess there can't anything nicer happen now that mother and father and Luke are here, and I have 'Topsy.' Do you think of anything, Mr. Field, that could be any happier?"

"Why, no," said Mr. Field thoughtfully, "I don't believe I do."

The next morning Mr. Field and Luke returned to Boston. When Aunt Maria bade Luke good-bye she said, "Luke, you have really begun to be an artist, and we all expect you to be just like Mr. Field."

The boy smiled up at her shyly. "And Margie is going to be just like you," he responded.

Marjorie was near at hand and said to Luke, with a little tone of anxiety in her voice, "It has to be gradual, you know, Luke. We can't expect to be like them right off."

"I know," replied the boy seriously.

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